GARDEN PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Small garden *special*

Real garden inspiration and designer tips

Rise of the 'trub'

You think you want a tree, but you need a shrub

Dahlia bliss

Expert's choice of the 17 best varieties and how to grow them

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Welcome

JOHN CAMPBELL

Small gardens, it is said, are the most difficult to design. Everything can be seen at once, and there are the added complications of being overlooked by neighbours and having the one view to gaze out on all year round. To aid you in this challenge, this issue is our Small Garden special edition, with six inspirational projects to explore, from the city to suburbia. There are sunny family gardens, shady woodland-style oases and plant-lovers' paradises, as well as designers' tips on how to make the most of a limited space (page 28).

Our columnist Nigel Slater discusses why he wouldn't want a larger garden than his small city space (page 25), and Professor Dave Goulson explains how even a tiny meadow patch in small garden can make a big difference to biodiversity (page 114). We look at the trend for using multi-stem, tree-like shrubs – because when you have a garden that's too small for the typical list of small trees, what you really need is one of these top-performing 'trubs' (page 82).

There are plenty more plants too, with head gardener Andrea Brunsendorf sharing her top plants for August (page 14); and we discover the charms of orchid-like *Roscoea*, which although exotic looking, are hardy, and perfect for adding colour to shady spots in summer. Plus at peak dahlia time, we find out about the rescue and relocation of the National Dahlia Collection thanks to one dedicated enthusiast, who gives her top cultivars and growing tips (page 58).

Also this issue, we meet Chilean landscape architect Teresa Moller (page 50) and budding flower farmer Sophia Gray (page 37), and enjoy recipes for foraged fruit and forgotten veg with chef Beth Al Rikabi (page 70).

Stephanie Mahon

STEPHANIE MAHON, EDITOR

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Peek inside columnist Nigel Slater's small city garden with our exclusive video tour. Click here or head to the *Gardens Illustrated* YouTube channel to watch.

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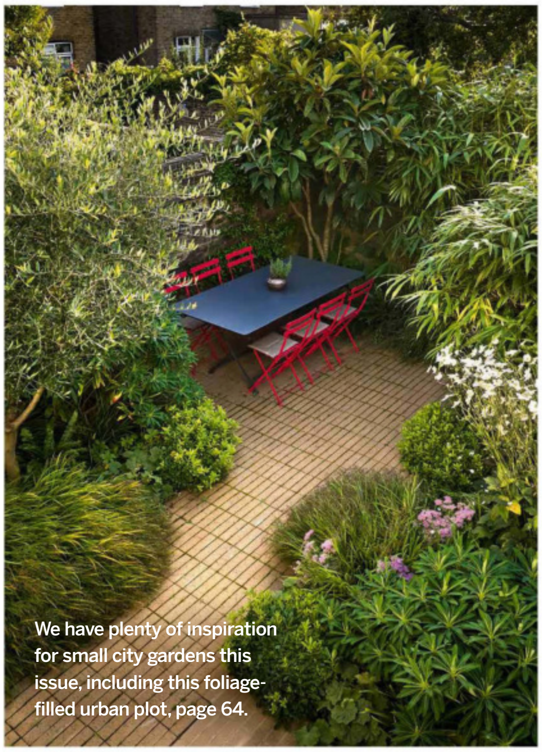
ALISTER THORPE

We have plenty of inspiration for small city gardens this issue, including this foliage-filled urban plot, page 64.

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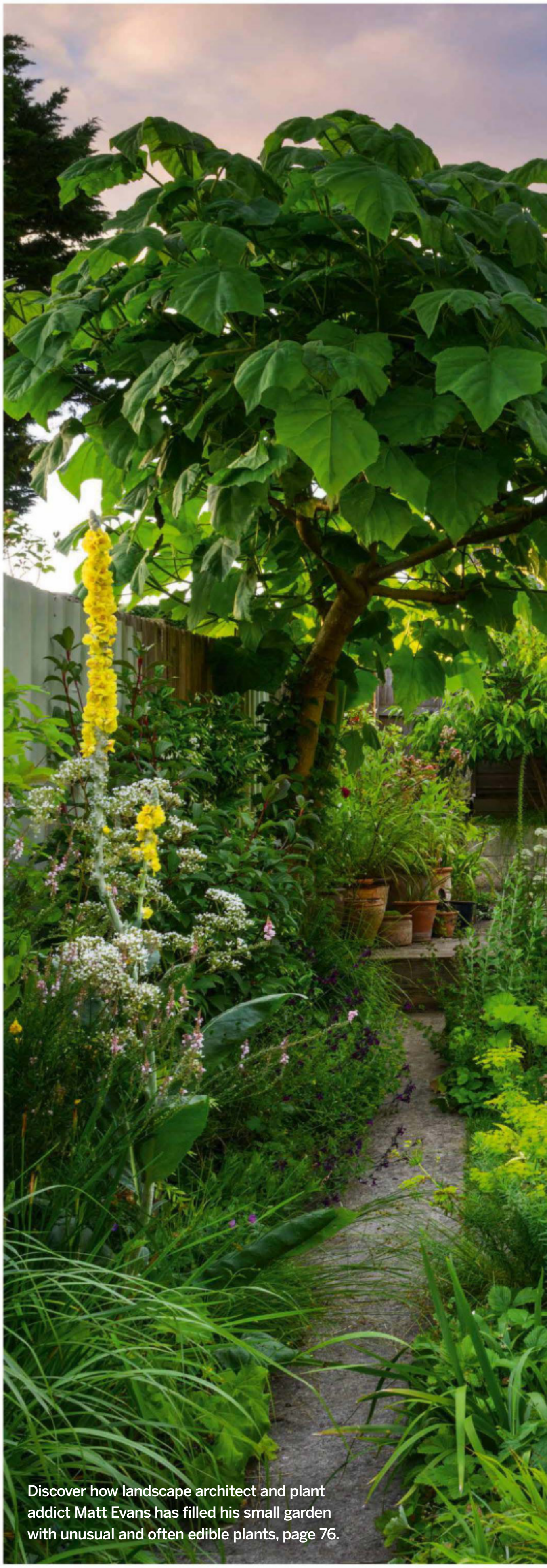

JASON INGRAM

Discover how landscape architect and plant addict Matt Evans has filled his small garden with unusual and often edible plants, page 76.

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COVER IMAGE

Small London garden, designed by Harry Holding. Photograph by Alister Thorpe (page 30)

ON THE COVER

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EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 22
- *Gardens Illustrated* readers can save on the cost of attending the International Meeting of the Landscape and Garden conference in Bergamo, Italy[†] – page 109

[†] Limited to the first 20 readers who sign up

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“All of the lessons have been fun and very informative, and the teaching has been excellent. HR

Design: Harry Holding

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MATT INWOOD

Jimena Martignoni

Jimena profiles Chilean landscape architect Teresa Moller, page 50. *“The opportunity to put Latin American designers in the spotlight is why I love to write.”*

Caitlin Atkinson

Caitlin photographs a small suburban garden, page 52. *“It was a true pleasure to photograph Jac Semmler’s home garden, a prolific display in verges, front garden and back lot.”*

Beth Al Rikabi

Beth shares recipes for late summer, page 70. *“Pendulous hedgerows and seasonal gluts make me hugely excited, providing oodles of inspiration for my creative cooking and recipe sharing.”*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Charlotte Harris

Charlotte co-founded the values-driven landscape design practice Harris Bugg Studio with Hugo Bugg in 2017. She has won three Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, as well as Best Show Garden in 2023.

Fergus Garrett

Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993 and is now CEO of the garden’s Charitable Trust. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

James Basson

James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design, a practice for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best Show Garden in 2017.

Anna Pavord

Anna was *The Independent*’s gardening correspondent for 30 years and is the author of the bestselling book *The Tulip*. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson

Dan is one of the UK’s best-known garden designers. Among his many award-winning gardens is the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan. He was awarded an OBE in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to horticulture.

Sarah Price

Sarah is one of the UK’s most sought-after garden designers. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012, 2018 and 2023, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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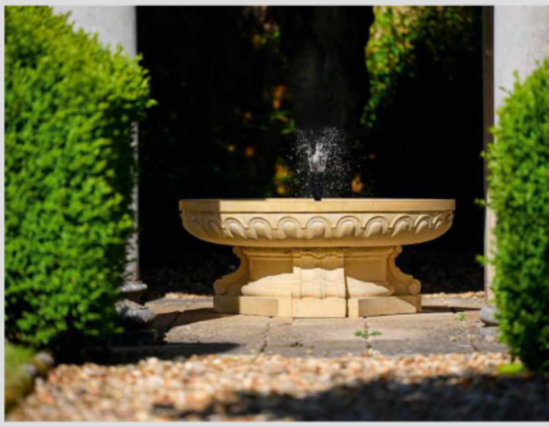

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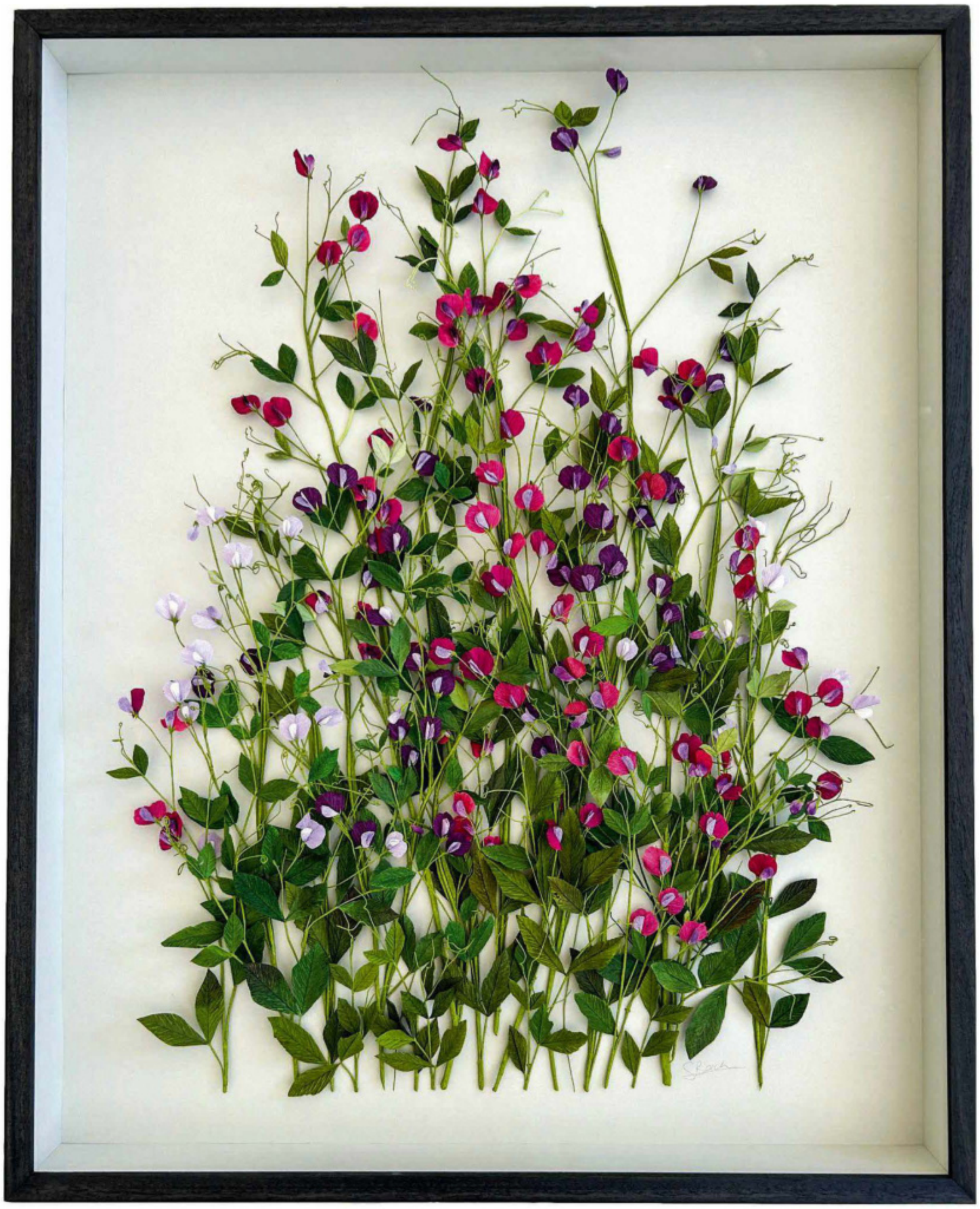
DIG IN

What's new, what's growing and what's going on this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **MOLLY BLAIR**



SUSAN BEECH

ART

FOREVER FLOWERS

Paper artist Susan Beech's beautifully delicate crepe-paper flowers and botanical sculptures are uncannily realistic. Each petal is intricately shaped by hand, and then coloured with ink, pastels and paint to create a soft gradation of colour. She's already well known to many for the works she has created for clients such as the National Trust and Nature Conservancy, and shares her skills in workshops around the UK. She has now launched a collection of framed botanical artworks. Prices start at £295 for a single paper rose or dahlia, rising to £7,950 for the vibrant sweet pea piece, *Strong Entanglement* (shown above). **apetalunfolds.com**

HARRY KELF

Talking point

ARE GARDENS NOW ON TREND?

Forget haute couture – it's all about hort couture right now as the fashion and gardening worlds come together. From the Met Gala, which had The Garden in Time as its theme this year, to the catwalk shows of some of fashion's biggest names, everything, it seems, is coming up roses.

Recently, a slew of fashion houses have collaborated with garden designers and gardens to create living catwalks. The Gucci Cruise 2025 Fashion Show took place in May in the underground 'tanks' of Tate Modern, filled with jungle-esque planting from garden design studio Cargill Sykes. Dior opted for an open-air show at Drummond Castle in Scotland, using the garden paths as the runway with the garden and castle forming the backdrop to models clad in tartan and tweed.

"Gardening, plants and nature have always been a rich source of inspiration for fashion," says Sharnee Gates, a model-turned-gardener (above). "The exchange between fashion and nature is timeless and celebrates beauty in ever-evolving ways. Fashion houses are increasingly keen on authentically creating a sustainable look and feel for their brands," she says. "As they shift towards more ethical practices to meet consumer demands, it only makes sense to highlight their slower, more deliberate processes and commitment to a greener lifestyle. In a world that's constantly speeding up, the gardener embodies the quintessential 'slow down and grow something' ethos, perfectly aligning with the values of sustainability and mindful living."

Find out more about this burgeoning relationship and what it means for gardening and fashion – scan the QR code with your phone camera, or go to **gardensillustrated.com/hort-couture**

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

OUT & ABOUT

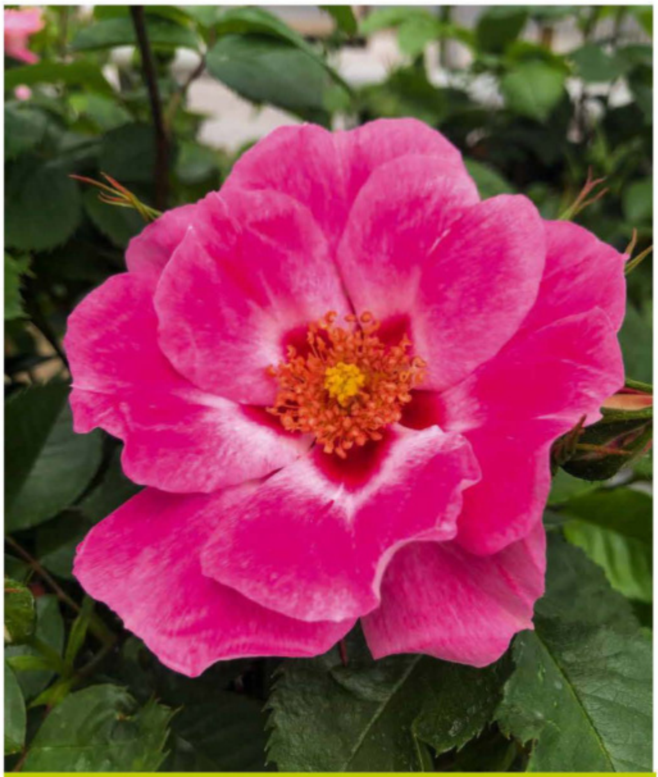
OPEN DOORS

Don't miss the chance to enjoy colourful borders and impressive topiary at Petersham House, adjacent to Petersham Nurseries in Richmond, Surrey, when the gardens open on 25 August. Visitors can only access the gardens on a few dates each year, and this is a great opportunity to see them at the height of summer. Tickets cost £16, with all funds raised going to local charity the Vineyard Community Centre. **petershamnurseries.com**

SHOPPING

DINING OUT

Best known for its excellent selection of trees and shrubs, Hillier has recently launched two new garden furniture ranges with dining options for every size of garden. The Henley range starts at £399 for a two-seat bistro set (shown right), with options up to six-seater dining sets; the Tenby range also includes dining sets for up to six diners plus a corner bench and lounging options. **hillier.co.uk**



DANIEL MYHILL

NEW PLANT

Rose-tinted vision

National Plant Collection Holder Daniel Myhill has launched a new hybrid rose in collaboration with Kordes Roses and plant retailer Marshalls Garden. *Rosa* See You in Rosé (= 'Korthulth004') grows to about 70cm tall and has open semi-double flowers with a deep-pink eye. Plants can be ordered bare root for delivery in November and cost £16.99, with £2 from every sale being donated to Plant Heritage. **marshallsgarden.com**

GARDENS

Climate champions

The National Trust garden Mount Stewart in Co. Down is one of three European gardens to win first prize in the Climate Mitigation Measures in the Parks and Gardens category of the European Garden Awards. The Arts and Crafts garden, on the shores of Strangford Lough, was created in the early 20th century and is made up of a series of 'rooms' filled with unrivalled plant collections, including Ireland's largest collection of oriental flowering lilies. Modelling has shown its most famous area, the lough-side Formal Gardens, will be under water in 100 years time, and the garden team has drawn up detailed plans to shelter the garden, plant more resilient species and create a new garden further inland. **nationaltrust.org.uk**

JAMES DOBSON / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES

What to do this month

BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS

25 AUGUST

Bonsai National Collection Open Day

Learn more about bonsai. Sunday 25 August, 10am-4pm. Free with garden admission (£9.35). Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Westbourne Road, Birmingham B15 3TR. **birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk**

30 AUGUST – 1 SEPTEMBER

Gather & Grow: Regeneration

A new three-day festival with workshops and talks on gardening, food and wellness. From Friday 30 August. From £35. The Newt in Somerset, Bruton, Somerset BA7 7NG. **thenewtinsomerset.com**

5 SEPTEMBER

Autumn Bouquet Workshop

Learn to make an autumn-inspired bouquet with Sarah from Pod & Pip. Tea, coffee and cake included. Thursday 5 September, 10am-12pm. £80. Pod & Pip, Ebble House, Stratford Tony, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 4AT. **podandpip.co.uk**

SHOPPING

Sumptuous suppers

Daylesford has launched a new home and tableware range perfect for al fresco dining. Comprising linen tablecloths and napkins, serving platters and plates, the Wildflower Collection features a watercolour design by artist Hugo Guinness depicting native species found in the meadows at Daylesford's farm, including cornflowers, ragwort, groundsel and flax. Prices start at £20 for a linen napkin (shown). **daylesford.com**

DAYLESFORD

SARAH CUTTLE

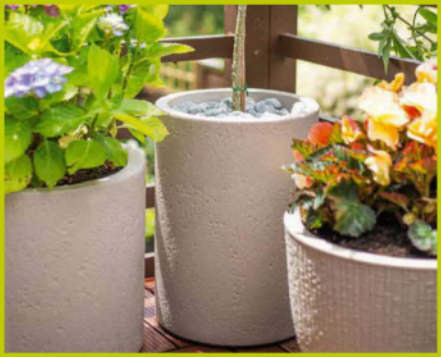
GARDENS

On the move

One of the RHS's Feature Gardens from the Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival will be relocated to the Sunnyside Rural Trust in Hertfordshire. The Peat-Free Garden, designed by Arit Anderson, was created to inspire more gardeners to transition to peat-free gardening practices, by showcasing what can be achieved with sustainable methods. From seed to plug to show plot, the whole garden was free from peat. After its relocation, the garden will form a new space for the community at Sunnyside, a charity and social enterprise that offers training to vulnerable people in the local community. It will provide an area for the trust's volunteers, trainees and employees to unwind and will also be open to the public. The new garden will be opened in spring 2025. For more information about Sunnyside Rural Trust, visit **sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk**

3 FOR THE GARDEN…

BALCONY PLANTERS



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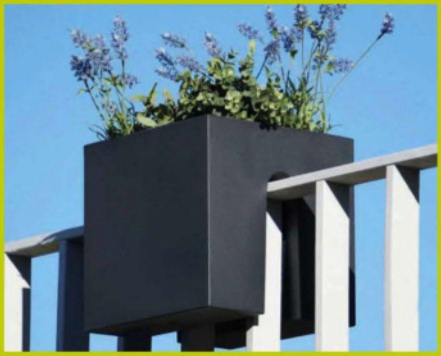
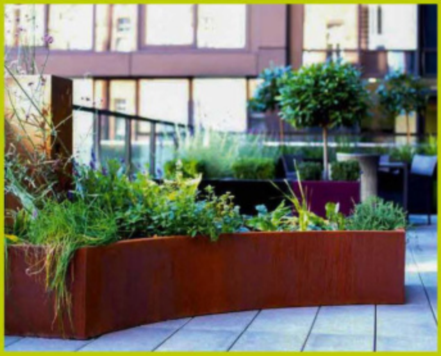


COMPACT
Rephorm Steckling Cube Balcony Planter, graphite, £63.50, Bloomling, bloomling.uk



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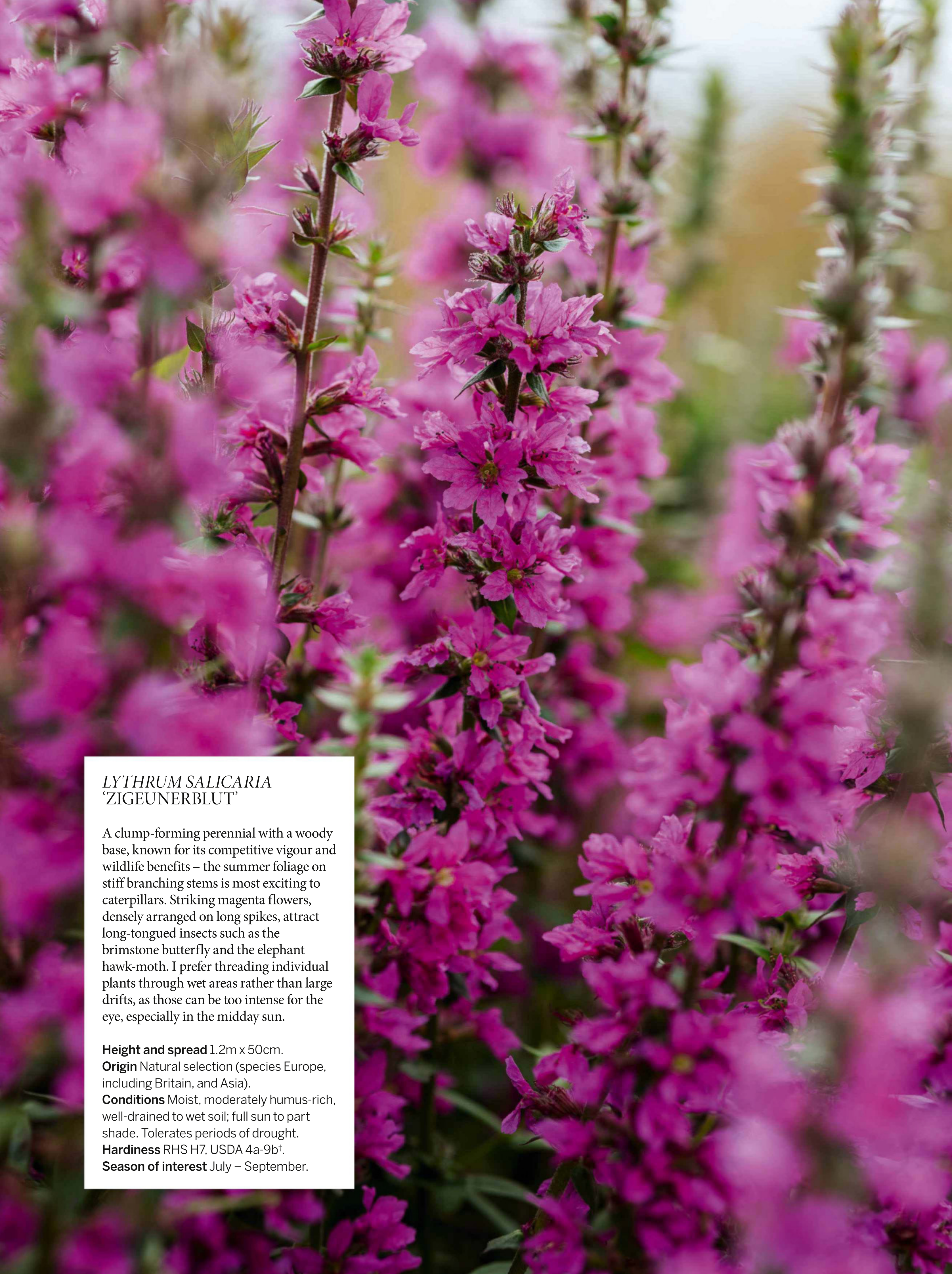


LYTHRUM SALICARIA
'ZIGEUNERBLUT'

A clump-forming perennial with a woody base, known for its competitive vigour and wildlife benefits – the summer foliage on stiff branching stems is most exciting to caterpillars. Striking magenta flowers, densely arranged on long spikes, attract long-tongued insects such as the brimstone butterfly and the elephant hawk-moth. I prefer threading individual plants through wet areas rather than large drifts, as those can be too intense for the eye, especially in the midday sun.

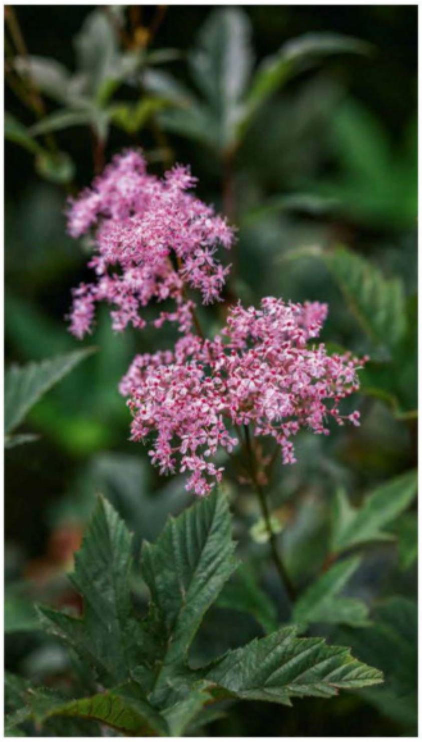
Height and spread 1.2m x 50cm.
Origin Natural selection (species Europe, including Britain, and Asia).
Conditions Moist, moderately humus-rich, well-drained to wet soil; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periods of drought.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b†.
Season of interest July – September.

August plants

As temperatures rise at Lowther Castle, head gardener **Andrea Brunsendorf** chooses a delicate climbing hydrangea, an easy-to-grow umbel and an airy, fragrant rose

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MAYBURY

Andrea Brunsendorf is head gardener at Lowther Castle & Gardens in Cumbria **lowthercastle.org**



FILIPENDULA RUBRA 'VENUSTA'

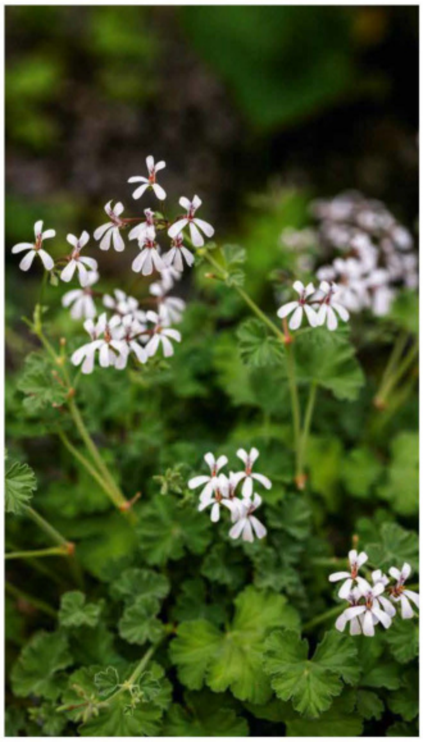
An upright perennial with a tough root system that is best left alone but can be divided in spring. The foliage is deeply cut into lobes like vine leaves, which can get scorched in dry summers. The terminal clusters of fragrant, fluffy, deep-rose flowers start as pretty, pale-pink pearls when in bud. The seedheads are engaging with their pinkish cast in the low winter light. Its common name, Queen of the Prairie, probably comes from its ability to create an impressive spectacle. AGM*.

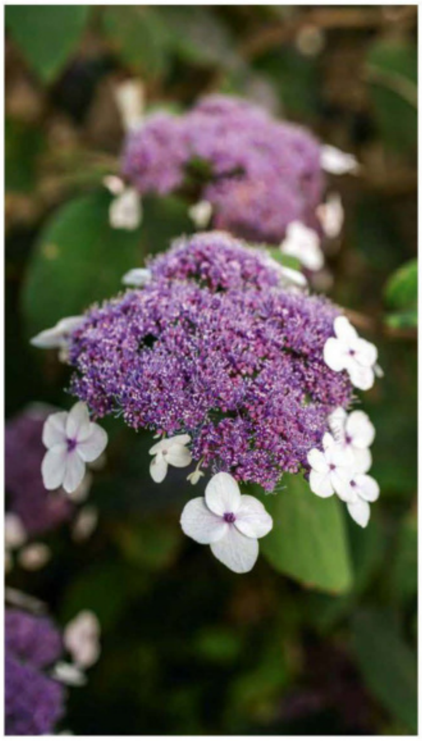
Height and spread 2m x 80cm.
Origin Eastern North America.
Conditions Moist, moderately humus-rich, well-drained soil; full sun, but tolerates light shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Flowers July – August; seedheads from October.

PELARGONIUM X FRAGRANS

This lovely, tender perennial adds understated elegance and fragrance to any pot display and is easily overwintered on a cool windowsill or in a conservatory. I love its small pine-scented, grey-green foliage and the profusion of delicate, white flowers with small, pink calyces. I so enjoy showcasing this one in the Lowther Castle café. It is assumed to be a natural hybrid with the characteristics of two South African species; it has never been found in the wild and was first described from the botanical garden in Berlin in 1806.

Height and spread 50cm x 50cm.
Origin Parent species South Africa.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, average to moderately humus-rich compost; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periodic droughts.
Hardiness RHS H1C, USDA 10a-11.
Season of interest April – October.





HYDRANGEA ASPERA SUBSP. *SARGENTIANA*

This sumptuous-looking, slow-growing deciduous shrub, introduced in 1908 by EH Wilson, will eventually become a magnificent specimen with large velvety leaves. It forms an open habit with its woody stems. The flowerheads are flat with showy white petals surrounding porcelain-blue flowers in the centre. It's fully hardy, but needs shelter for best results, as late spring frost and persistent wind will damage the beautiful foliage. We grow it in Lowther's courtyard, with a carpet of barrenwort below it. AGM.

Height and spread 2m x 2.5m.
Origin Western Hubei province, China.
Conditions Prefers moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil; part shade, but will tolerate full sun in consistently moist soils.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest June – August.

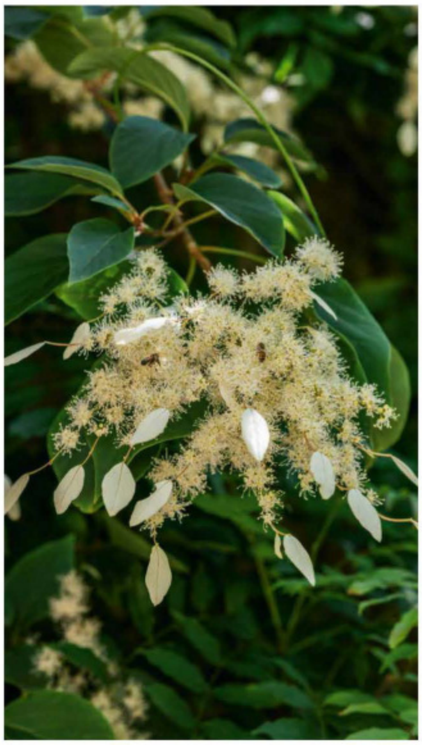
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

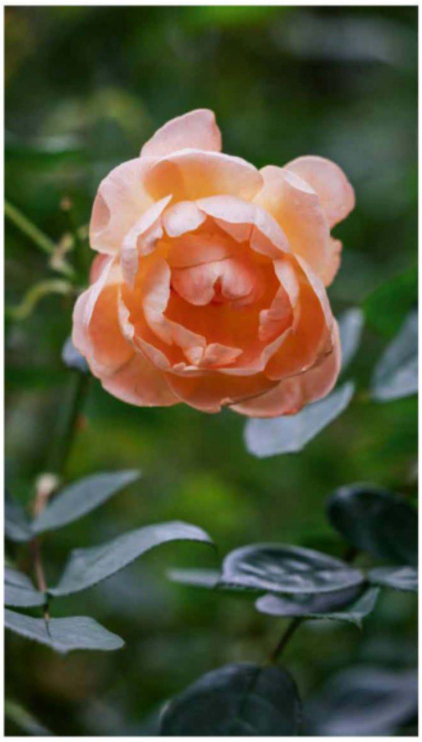
> This tall, airy shrub rose flowers freely from early summer. It races to the skies to join the skylarks with its gently cupped and warm-apricot flowers

HYDRANGEA AMPLA

Better known as *Schizophragma integrifolium*, this deciduous and extremely versatile climber has handsome leaves that are long-stalked and ovate with slender tips and finely toothed margins. The slightly scented lacecap-style flowers are as much as 30cm across with white-creamy fluffy flowers surrounded by eye-catching elongated white bracts, very pretty indeed. Its aerial roots mean it doesn't need support to scramble up walls and trees, and so is an excellent choice for those tricky, shady north-facing walls. AGM.

Height and spread 12m x 4m.
Origin Central to Western China.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest July – August.





ROSA THE LARK ASCENDING (= 'AUSURSULA')

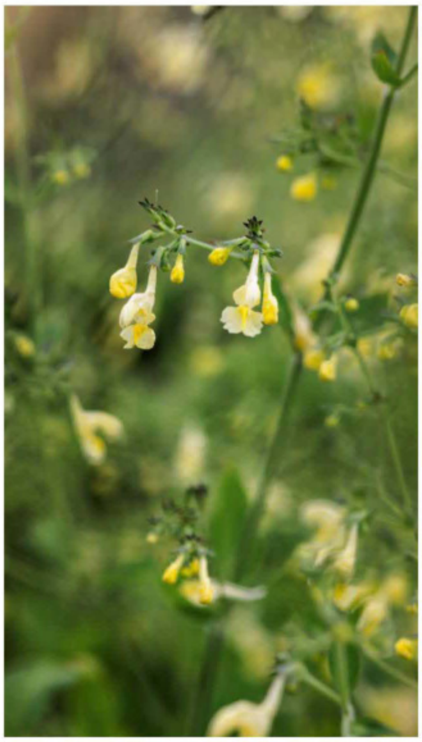
This tall, airy shrub rose is reliable and flowers freely from early summer onwards. It races to the skies to join the skylarks with its gently cupped and warm-apricot flowers, which will repeat until the first frost. It is one of our best performers. The semi-double floral structure attracts bees and human noses with its light myrrh scent that fills the summer air. This rose celebrates, of course, a beloved piece of English music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, whose second wife Ursula is remembered in its cultivar name.

Height and spread 1.5m x 1.5m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, rich, fertile soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Mid-May to first frost.

NEPETA GOVANIANA

Unlike the rest of the genus, this catmint thrives well in cool climates with damp and retentive soils, making it an ideal perennial for the Lake District. The very aromatic oval-shaped, soft-haired foliage emerges relatively late in the spring, which can make impatient gardeners slightly worried that it might be lost to winter wet and cold. It blooms with open sprays of fragrant, pale-yellow flowers, very effective in their dainty showiness. It is a graceful addition to any border or woodland edge and deserves to be seen more often. AGM.

Height and spread 1.2m x 60cm.
Origin Pakistan to Western Himalayas.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periodic droughts.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest July – September.



CENOLOPHIUM DENUDATUM

A hardy, easy-to-grow perennial with an impressive mound of finely divided dark-green foliage and tall, branching stems topped with lacey white flowers that are loved by butterflies, bees and other pollinating insects. This long-lived umbel creates a delicate airiness in the Tapestry Parterre and contrasts with the strong, vertical lines of neighbouring plants. We encourage it to self-seed by leaving the seedheads in place. Germination can be erratic; it is best to sow fresh seed in autumn and expose it to fluctuating winter temperatures. AGM.

Height and spread 1.5m x 50cm.
Origin Eastern Europe to Siberia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. Once established, tolerates periodic droughts.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest June – September.

PHACELIA TANACETIFOLIA

This agricultural cover crop has become a popular pollinator plant within the gardening community, attracting many beneficial insects and improving soil structures. Sow in situ from spring to early autumn; it will survive a mild winter with its distinct grey-green and fern-like foliage. It produces an abundance of terminal, lavender-blue flowers. It will readily self-seed, so dig it in before the flowers are spent or collect them. I always have this annual ready for when left with an unforeseen summer gap in the border.

Height and spread 1.2m x 30cm.
Origin Southwestern USA to northwest Mexico.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, well-prepared soil; full sun. Tolerates periodic droughts.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.
Season of interest Mid-April to first frost.

CLICK HERE to watch our video, and discover why *Aesculus parviflora* is Andrea's plant of the month.

AESCULUS PARVIFLORA

Wide-spreading, suckering deciduous shrub with palmate, green foliage turning to an attractive yellow in autumn. The showy, upright white panicles of flowers have conspicuous red anthers and white filaments that attract butterflies. In our climate, it's unlikely these will produce their inedible, glossy, pear-shaped, buckeye nuts. Established specimens in full bloom look spectacular, especially when grown en masse along woodland fringes. You can rejuvenate plants by cutting to the ground, but pruning is seldom necessary. AGM.

Height and spread 4m x 8m.
Origin Southeastern USA.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, preferably humus-rich and acid soil; part sun to full shade. Tolerates wet soils and sunny sites.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest July – August.

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Stylish ideas to make the most of any small garden or petite growing space

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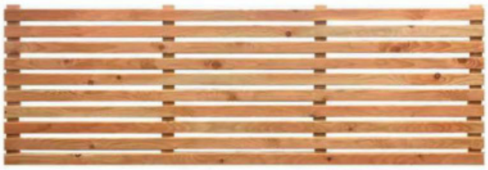
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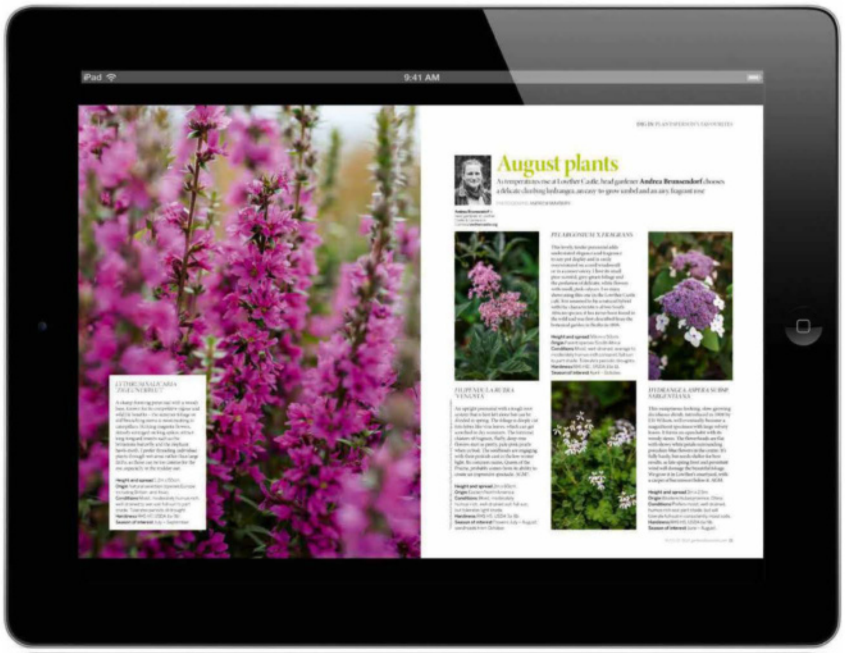
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Off the grid

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This was Sylvia's promise to you...

A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

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SMALL PLEASURES

While **Nigel Slater** might occasionally dream of a larger garden, the joy he feels cocooned in his tiny basement courtyard has convinced him size isn't everything

ILLUSTRATION **PAUL WEARING** PORTRAIT **JOHN CAMPBELL**

I sway back and forth between wanting a larger garden and one that is smaller and more manageable. A larger garden would offer the chance for my longed-for greenhouse, a timber framed, green-roofed shed and room for a cluster of raised vegetable beds. A smaller one, on the other hand, would allow me the luxury of being in control. An option that seems ever more tempting.

My main garden is small and rather typical of the long, thin 'shoe-box' spaces that go hand-in-hand with living in an urban terrace. Unusually, the house also benefits from a tiny, sunken basement garden at the rear. Barely four metres square, it sits several feet below the principal garden. It is, I think, rather charming. Protected by high walls and a micro-climate due to a conveniently sited Aga outlet, it has always felt like a separate garden and is treated as such.

On a bad day, when the main garden is a bit of a mess, awash with fallen leaves or browning to a crisp through lack of rain, I often seek sanctuary in this basement space. The floor is of old red bricks. A zinc-topped table sits squat in the middle, stacked with terracotta pots of narcissi in spring and swaying cosmos and ferns in summer. A vast tree fern hangs over it like a green umbrella.

One wall is home to a climbing jasmine. With a little help from a handful of wires, it has formed a canopy over the table, offering enough shade for a cluster of potted ferns. Pelargoniums wriggle their way invitingly up the small staircase to the main garden. Wisteria clambers up the remaining wall. Only one side of this basement space has any sort of border and it is a slim one, about 50cm wide, that is taken up with a climbing *Hydrangea petiolaris* and a bushy *Pittosporum tobira*.

I have never felt frustrated by the size of this 'second' garden. In fact, I celebrate its diminutive dimensions and have the ▷

A small garden can be a tiny, sparkling jewel, a paradise of pots, pergolas and planters

▷ sort of fondness for it one might have for the smaller of one's two cats. The cosiness appeals and its high walls make it feel like a safe space, but there are other reasons to love this little garden. For once, I feel in control. I can reach the rampant tendrils of the wisteria and trim the climbing rose; I can clean the gutters and prune the overhanging fig without endangering life and limb. Down here in the basement, I am on top of the slug problem and can tame my neighbour's marauding Russian vine. There is not a weed in sight. Perhaps a smaller garden is the answer.

If this were my only space, I would still be a happy gardener. No matter how diminutive a patch I may have, I would still be able to plant my 'must-haves'. A small tree – an acer perhaps or a crab apple. A rose for the walls, though more 'Madame Alfred Carrière' than 'Rambling Rector'. And I would make sure there was room for some sort of potting table. My own is barely a metre long, tucked in the corner of this basement space and is quite invaluable. What my smaller space might lack in square meterage, it would make up for in height, with every wall stacked with climbers and tall, swaying tree ferns.

Everything that is wrong with my larger, long, thin garden would be put right if I were to have only a smaller space. There would be no room for 'the plant hospice' (it would force me to be ruthless with ailing shrubs) and there would be nowhere to put the half-open bag of compost that migrates around the place according to where I last used it. I could also put paid to the endless temptations of nurseries and garden centres because I know that there really is no room for yet another rose.

A small garden can be a tiny, sparkling jewel, a paradise of pots, pergolas and planters. With less space between them, plants can jostle one another and live in a romantic tangle. Plants so close together would be a haven for pollinators. There is a certain appeal in the idea of letting a small garden develop into a bit of a jungle too. An illusion of space created by many layers of shrubs and perennials. Banana palms and bamboos to push aside as you walk, cannas and dahlias on different levels, plants that are tall and lush and can turn a small square of outdoors into a little forest. My own tree fern, *Dicksonia antarctica*, has grown, albeit rather slowly, over the past six years or so, and now stands a good two and a half metres tall. The trunk and the pot it stands in takes up little space but the effect of the huge shuttlecock canopy gives you something to dip under, again increasing the illusion of space.

I am probably not the only gardener who tries to pack a quart into a pint pot. This little basement garden has barely a centimetre unfilled, but that lends a joyous feeling of abundance. To replace this glorious green clutter with one specimen plant – an acer perhaps – is tempting but could end up exaggerating its minuscule measurements. A small space is an opportunity for some imaginative thinking. Plants, plants and more plants seems to be the way to go. □

To take a guided video tour of Nigel Slater's small London garden, click here or head to the *Gardens Illustrated* YouTube channel.

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14 top design tips for small gardens

Three of this issue's designers share expert advice on creating small spaces that really work, with insightful dos and don'ts to apply to your own garden

Even a small water feature will have multiple benefits. See the rest of this small garden designed by Harry Holding on page 30.

1 Add depth

Don't be afraid to plant trees and shrubs towards the centre of the garden rather than around the edges. This will bring depth to the space and can help create a sense of mystery – a garden looks and feels bigger when you can't read it all as one.

2 Create a journey

Not being able to see what's at the end of the garden or what's around a corner gives a reason to venture through the space, as well as making it more exciting. At its simplest, a meandering path can often add more interest and intrigue than a straight one.

3 Include water

Every garden should have water – it's the easiest way to boost the biodiversity of a space. Even a very simple water bowl will attract wildlife, add a sense of calm and draw down the sky into the garden – a lovely thing amongst tall trees or dense buildings.

4 Be bold

Rather than having lots of small plants or pots, go big and bold. One large container has so much more impact than five small ones. Likewise, trees or shrubs such as amelanchiers, acers and crab apples can be surprisingly effective in small spaces.

5 Keep it simple

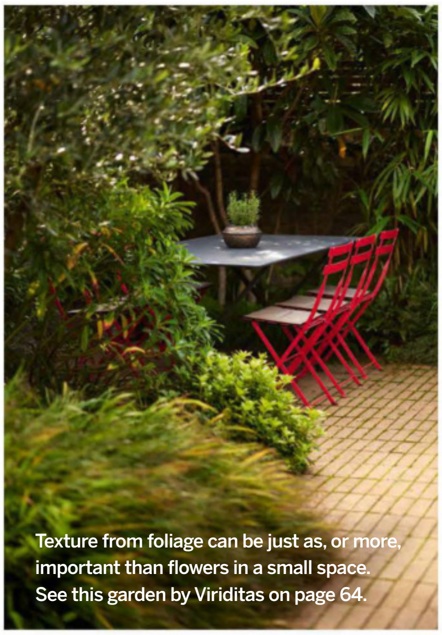
In a smaller space, it often pays to keep your material palette really refined. Simple is best. Choose two or three hard landscaping materials and stick to them. That's not to say things have to be boring – bricks or pavers can be laid in different patterns for visual interest.

6 Don't skimp on beds

It might feel counterintuitive to make planting beds bigger in a small garden, but generously sized areas of greenery will help to make the space feel larger.

7 Foliage matters

Think about foliage texture and colour. In a small space, contrasting foliage can make a huge difference. Aim for a few larger specimens, underplanted with a pared-back palette. *Fatsia japonica* and *Mahonia eurybracteata* subsp. *ganpinensis* 'Soft Caress' offer interesting year-round foliage and out-of-season nectar for pollinators.



Texture from foliage can be just as, or more, important than flowers in a small space. See this garden by Viriditas on page 64.

You can underplant these with *Liriope muscari*, hellebores and ferns.

9 Think about verticals

Cloaking walls and fences in evergreen climbers will create a more coherent look when a garden is surrounded by a mix of different fences or walls, and make a small garden feel larger. Choose plants such as *Trachelospermum jasminoides* with its gorgeously scented, star-shaped summer flowers and *Clematis armandii*, which brightens the garden in early spring with its profusion of white flowers.

10 Lose the lawn

Work out what space is needed for your furniture elements and functional areas such as a dining table or outdoor kitchen and plant up the rest of the garden for a more immersive experience.

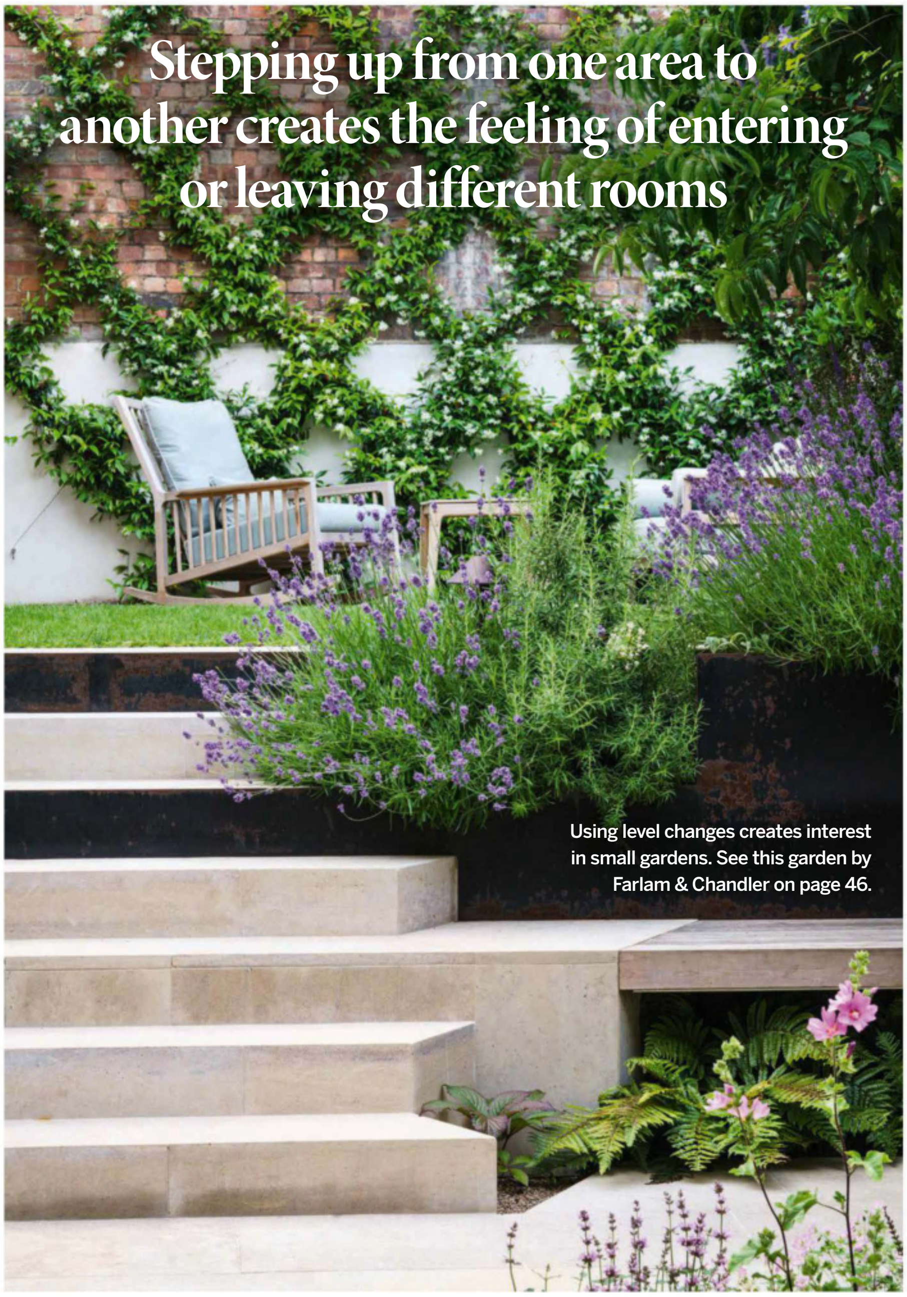
11 Choose good paving

Think about how the hardscaping materials you choose will weather, and look in the depths of winter. Limestone is a harder, less porous material than sandstone, which will quickly become covered in moss and dirt in a shady spot where it remains wet for long periods.

12 Add level changes

Consider the topography of the garden and embrace level changes. Stepping up from one area to another creates the feeling of entering or leaving different rooms, enhancing the feeling of a larger space. Just two or three steps will help to create this effect.

ALISTER THORPE, RACHEL WARNE



Stepping up from one area to another creates the feeling of entering or leaving different rooms

Using level changes creates interest in small gardens. See this garden by Farlam & Chandler on page 46.

13 Don't forget seating

Create places in the garden to enjoy at various times of the day: morning coffee on the steps or a late evening drink on a west-facing terrace, for example, entice you to use all of the space and create more areas to explore. Multifunctional and integrated seating makes efficient use of the space while creating a clean, uncluttered look. In the garden above right, there is a storage cupboard under one of the built-in benches, which is butted up to the steps to extend seating space when it's needed.

14 Inject seasonality

A small garden is normally on view all year round, so it's important to consider the planting for each season. Include a balance of evergreens for structure, deciduous plants such as grasses that look good throughout the winter months, along with spring bulbs and summer- and autumn-flowering perennials for pops of colour.

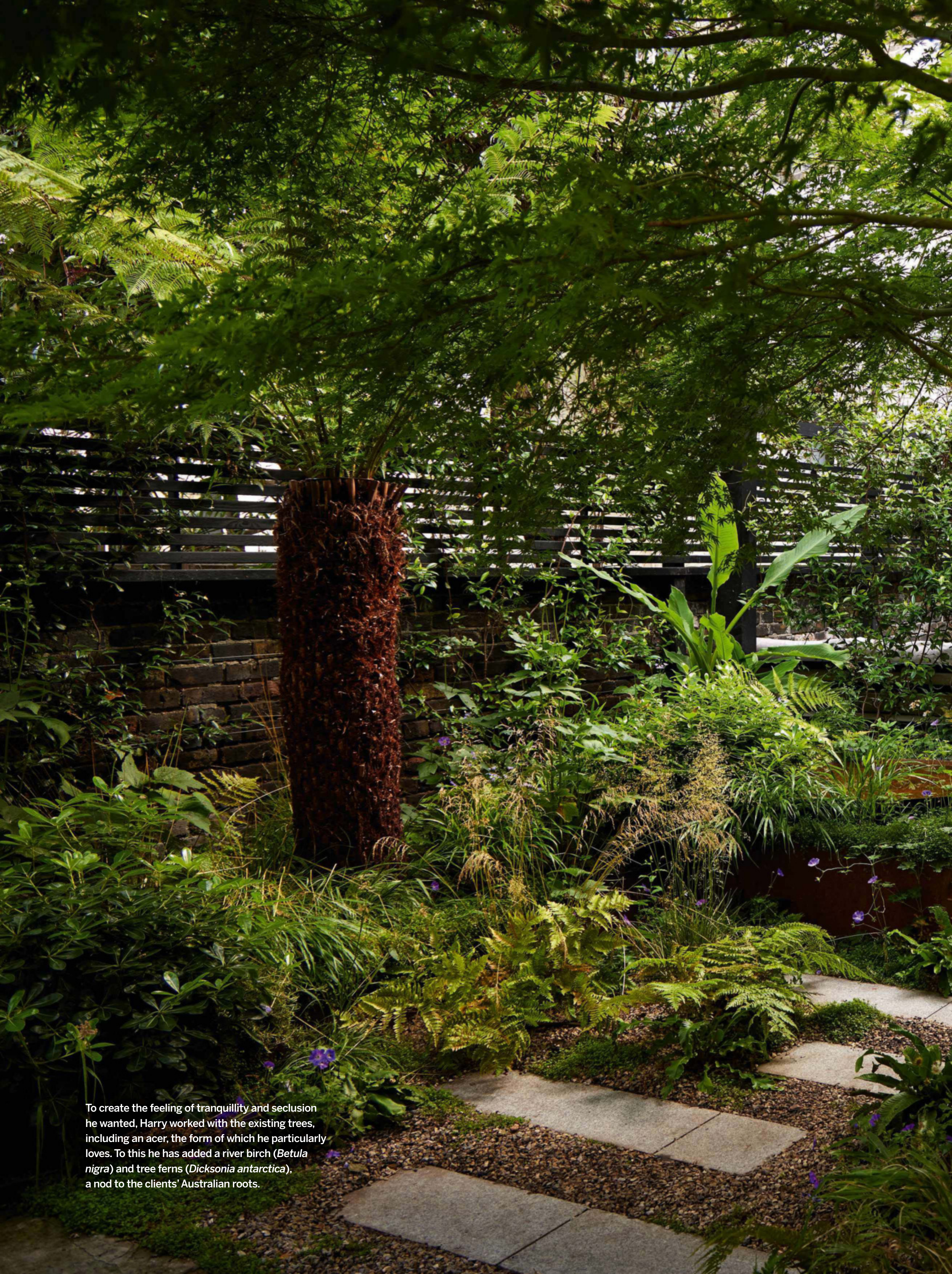
DESIGNERS

Harry Holding is an award-winning designer who runs an international landscape and garden design studio in London and Bristol.

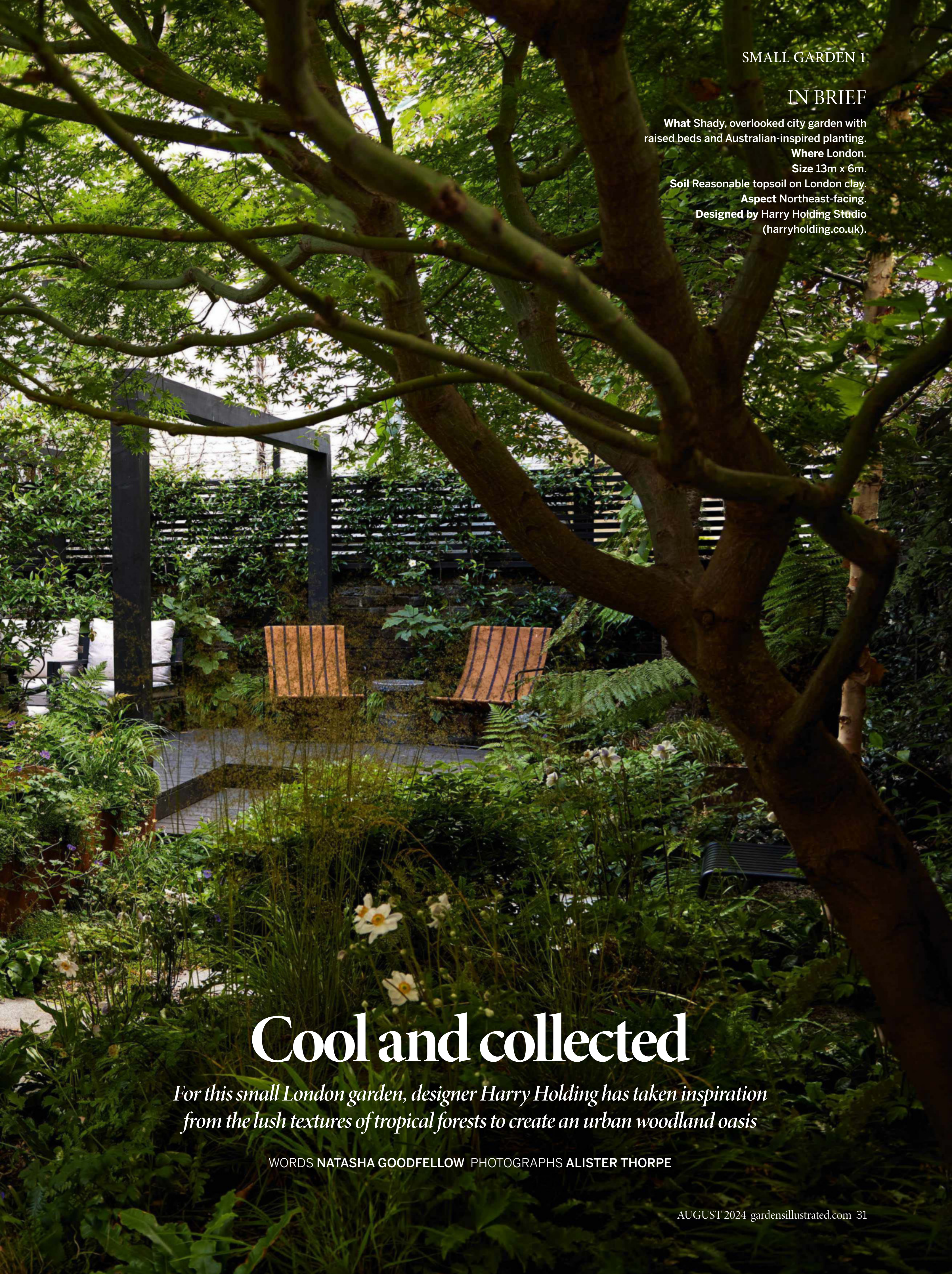
Caroline Clayton manages Viriditas Studio in London with her brother Peter. Silver-Gilt medal at Hampton Court in 2023.

Harriet Farlam and Ben Chandler founded their practice Farlam & Chandler in 2018 and work on landscapes in the UK and abroad.

GI For more small garden inspiration, go to **gardensillustrated.com/small-garden-tips**



To create the feeling of tranquillity and seclusion he wanted, Harry worked with the existing trees, including an acer, the form of which he particularly loves. To this he has added a river birch (*Betula nigra*) and tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*), a nod to the clients' Australian roots.



IN BRIEF

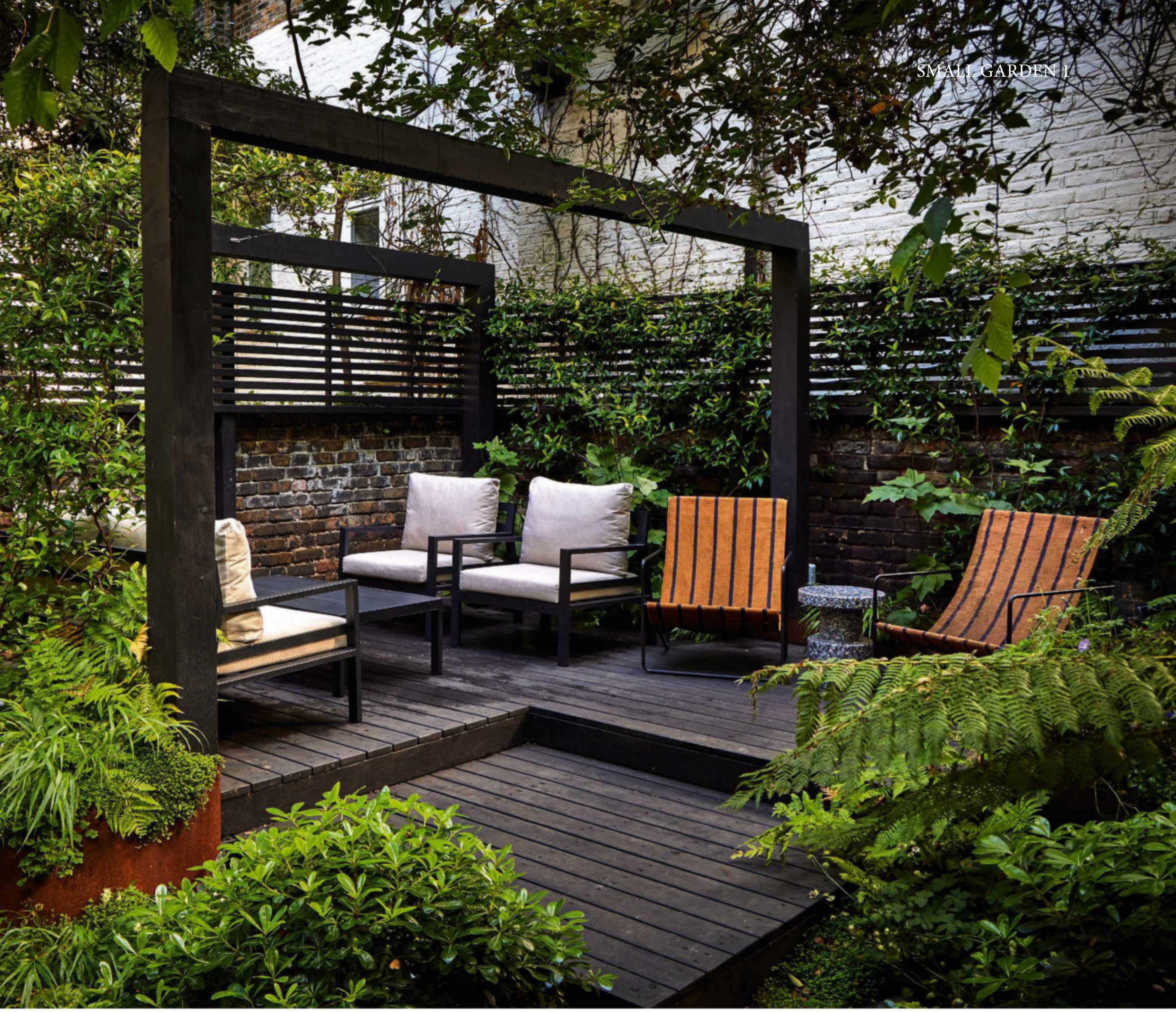
What Shady, overlooked city garden with raised beds and Australian-inspired planting.
Where London.
Size 13m x 6m.
Soil Reasonable topsoil on London clay.
Aspect Northeast-facing.
Designed by Harry Holding Studio (harryholding.co.uk).

Cool and collected

For this small London garden, designer Harry Holding has taken inspiration from the lush textures of tropical forests to create an urban woodland oasis

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **ALISTER THORPE**

Harry took inspiration from the lush, green textures of tropical forests, adapting his choices to suit the London microclimate



In all aspects of design, the best exemplars don't just make something look good, they make it work well too. And so it is with this garden design, by Harry Holding Studio, in Earl's Court, London. "We knew we were lucky to have a decent-size garden in inner city London," says owner Tara Moss, who lives here with her husband and two teenage sons. "But we never really used the space before – it just didn't work for us."

The garden's previous layout featured an ugly, patchy lawn overhung by a mature acer and a cherry tree, which cast it in shade, but did little to screen the garden from the neighbours. A shed was positioned in the only sunny spot. "We'd find ourselves huddled as close to it as we could get – it wasn't particularly comfortable," says Tara. Attracted to Harry's work by pictures she'd seen of other lawnless gardens he'd designed, she commissioned him to make a space that the family would enjoy both being in and entertaining in.

Though Harry agreed the lawn and shed had to go, rather than looking to remove the trees, he chose to work with them, relishing the lush, mature atmosphere they create. "It was exciting to have a space that had good bones to work with," he says. Also in the "good bones" camp was the beautiful old brick wall that surrounds the garden, to which he attached black-painted horizontal trellis for extra privacy. An existing paved terrace was also left as was. "The cost and the carbon footprint of ripping it out and replacing it would have been high," says Harry. "We decided it was better to maximise our budget through the rest of the garden."

The trees had previously been planted in brick raised beds and, while Harry wouldn't normally opt for raised beds in such a ▷

Left above A simple Corten steel water bowl not only looks beautiful, 'drawing down the sky into the garden', as Harry puts it, but it's also a huge biodiversity boon, attracting all sorts of wildlife. It is surrounded by *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum', *Hakonechloa macra* and *Dryopteris erythrosora,* whose coppery tones in spring and autumn complement those of the steel.

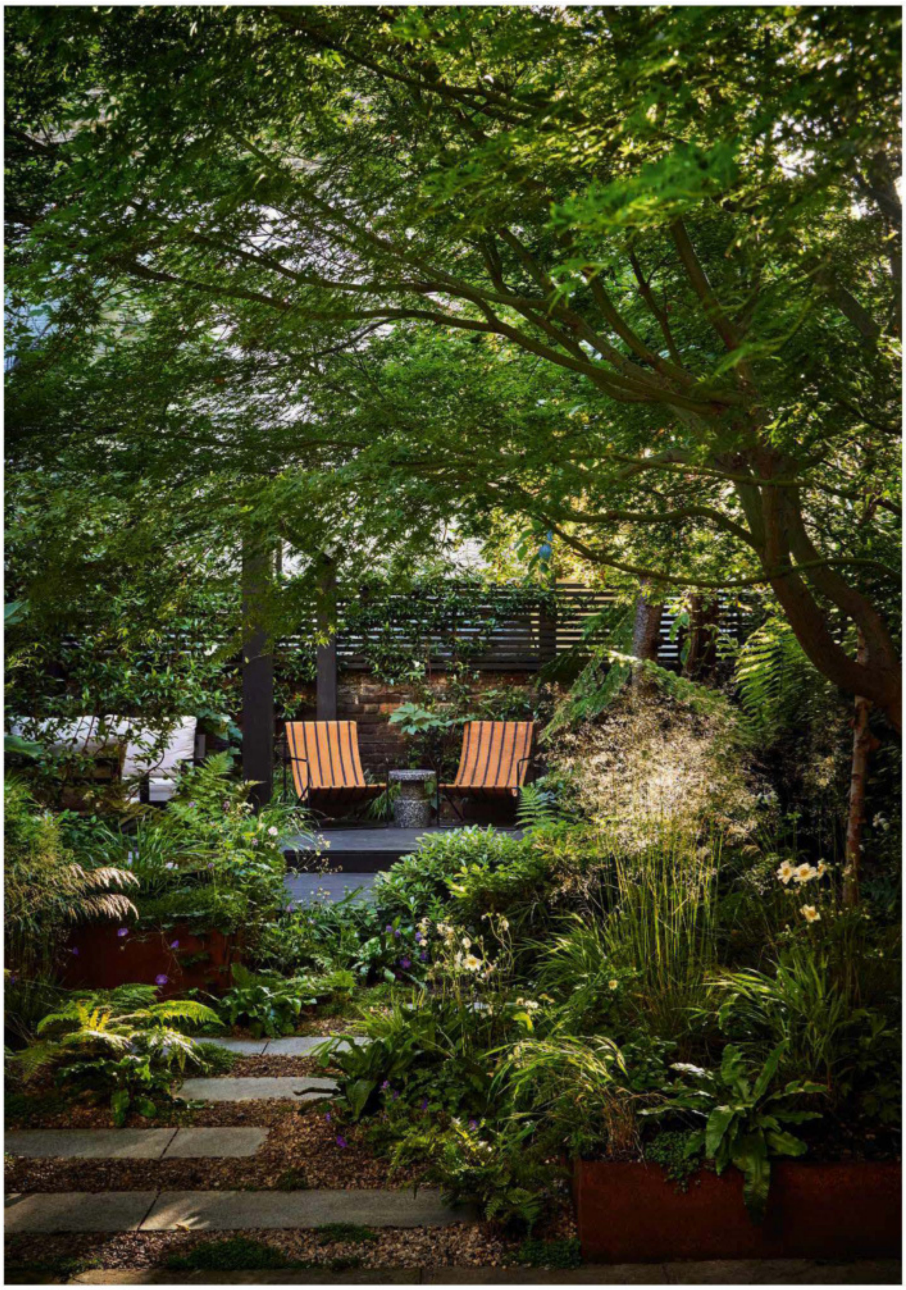
Left below Space to entertain was a key part of the brief. Harry retained the existing paving to minimise the carbon footprint and maximise the budget, allowing for a large built-in barbecue to be included. The dining furniture is from Hay's Palissade range.

Above Though much of the pergola and trellis are covered with scented *Trachelospermum jasminoides* trained up wires to screen out the windows of neighbouring houses, some areas have been left deliberately bare to celebrate the beauty and texture of the existing brick wall.

Right above By extending the raised beds and using layers of planting, Harry has created a space that pulses with mystery and intrigue. This is particularly true when it is backlit by the morning sun, when the flowers of the grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* look especially magical. The Desert lounge chairs are from Ferm Living.

Right below Positioned in the only spot that receives any sustained sunshine, the pergola was designed to be minimal and contemporary, and painted black to recede into the garden. The design echoes the architectural detailing of the house.

Facing page Granite plank stepping stones, chosen to match the patio, weave through repeat plantings of *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum', *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert', *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat'), *Asplenium scolopendrium* and *Dryopteris erythrosora*.

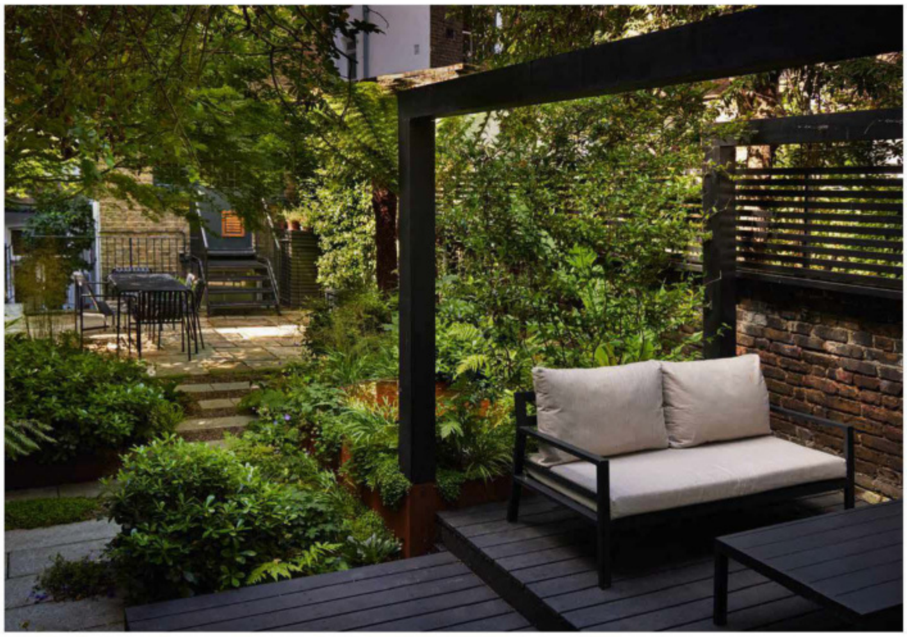


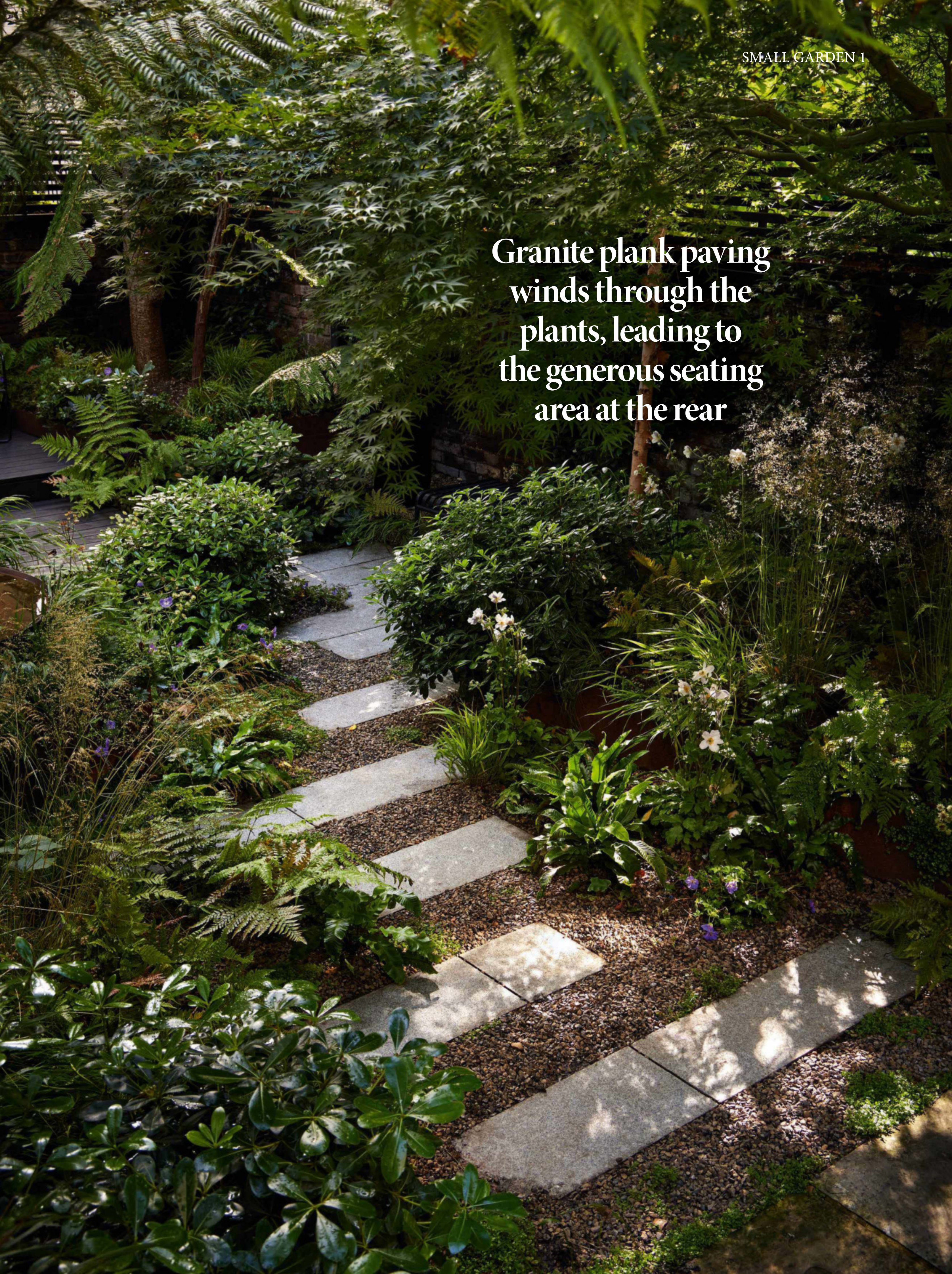
▷ small space, here he decided to lean into the idea. By introducing more of them (albeit in Corten steel) and bringing them further into the space, he has given the garden more interest and mystery, preventing it from being seen all at once. Of course, the planting adds to this and, since the clients are Australian, Harry took inspiration from the lush, green textures of the tropical forests there, adapting his choices to suit the London microclimate. He planted a river birch (*Betula nigra*) for additional canopy cover, and three tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) and a banana (*Musa basjoo*) as an eye-catching mid-layer, with a luxuriant underlayer of small shrubs (*Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum'), ferns (*Dryopteris erythrosora*), grasses (*Hakonechloa macra)* and resilient, shade-loving perennials.

Granite plank paving, softened by vivid-green groundcover *Soleirolia soleirolii*, winds through the plants, leading to the generous seating area at the rear where the shed once stood. To shield it from neighbouring properties, this is framed by an elegant pergola structure across which star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) climbs.

Throughout, Harry has been careful to tie his design in with the dark, masculine decor of the house. The slim slats of the black dining furniture, from Hay's Palissade range, along with the trellis on the wall and the shape of the pergola, all echo the window joinery, while the Corten steel planters and water feature pick up the russet of the tree ferns' trunks beautifully.

"We can't believe how well it's all come together," says Tara. "We eat outside, we entertain outside and I love how it feels like a little oasis – far away from the traffic and the noise. Most of all though, I love how much our boys use it. They'd pretty much stopped going out there before, now they're in it all the time." ☐





Granite plank paving winds through the plants, leading to the generous seating area at the rear

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SOPHIA GRAY

Social worker Sophia is part of the Flowers from the Farm collective, supplying cut flowers from her Swindon allotment

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory My dad growing sunflowers in the front garden. I remember asking my mum if they would grow higher than the windows. They did.

First plant love Sweet peas. They were one of the first plants I grew and I remember admiring their tendrils and ability to climb. Their scent was also exciting. I had heard about it but had never experienced it until I grew them myself.

Who has inspired your career the most? The staff and trainees at Organic Blooms Flower Farm. They grow skills, confidence and wellbeing of people alongside the cut flowers. Their work combines my two passions – plants and people.

Who are your horticultural heroes and why? My late mother-in-law Karen who was a landscaper for Islington Council in the early 2000s after retraining in horticulture in her thirties. Her balcony garden made me realise that a garden is what you make of it, no matter the size.

Favourite garden Hunte's Gardens in Barbados. I got married there in 2019. I love the series of mini-gardens that can be enjoyed within the whole site and how the garden invites a sense of discovery through its layout and structure.

Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener Keep records. I take photos at all stages and they have become an invaluable resource. Understand your space and growing conditions, sunlight, soil, exposure and pests. Replicate what works in your space but also remember to be adventurous and try new plant varieties and growing methods.

Favourite planting style Hands down cottage garden – wafty and informal with lots of scent and texture.

Favourite 'weed' Dandelions. I pull them out of beds and pots but I'm more than happy to let them grow on allotment paths for the bees. My little boy loves blowing the clocks, so the pure joy they provide for him means they are welcome.

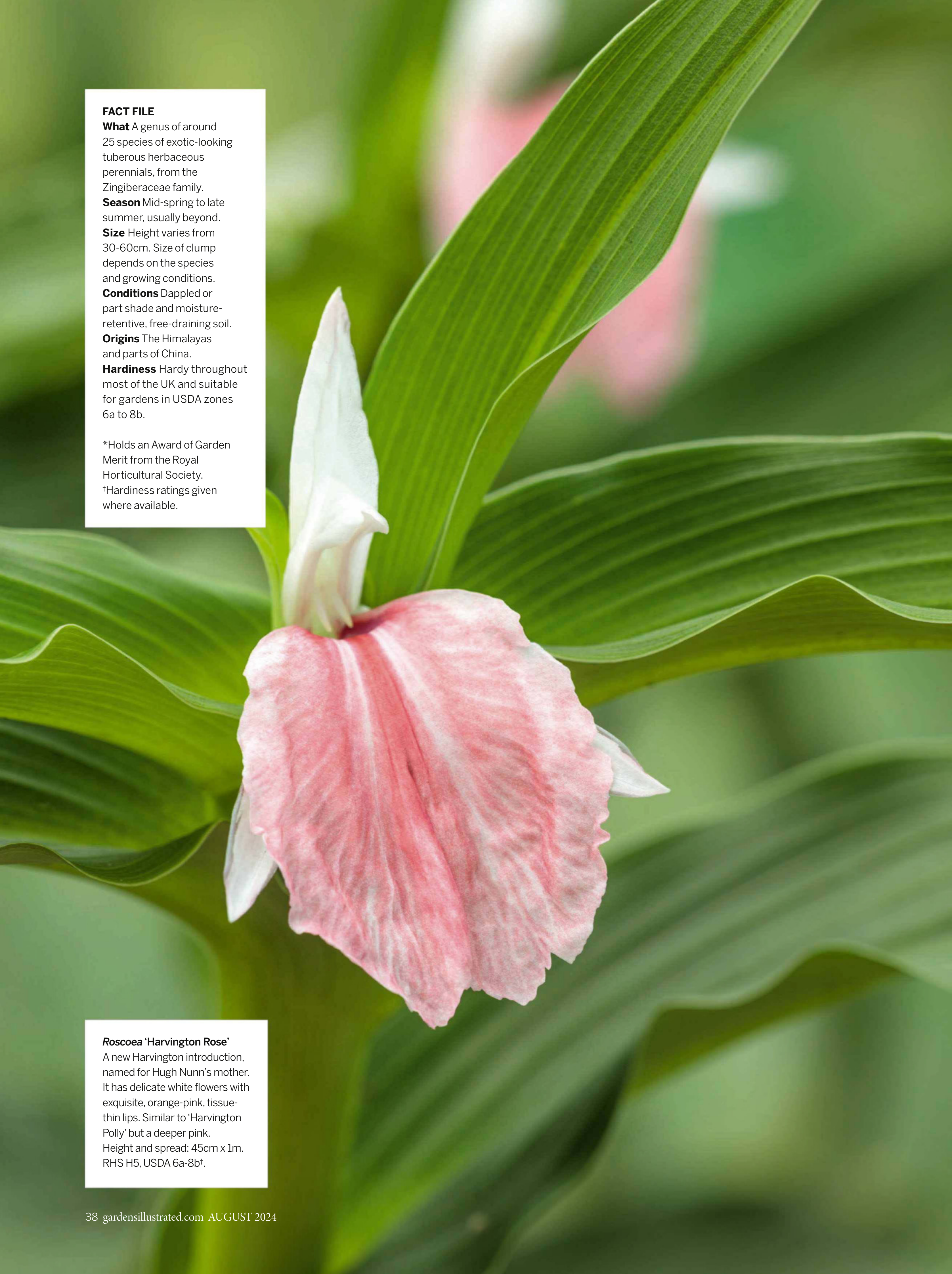
One easy thing every gardener can do Collect and save your own seeds. It saves money and also means you can grow flowers well suited to your growing environment.

Where do you see horticulture heading? There will be more of a push to future/climate proof the way that we grow and garden in light of climate change. I also think there is a growing interest in increasing and diversifying access to horticulture for individuals, communities and groups.

Do you have an ambition? Creating a social enterprise project that would allow children and young people in Swindon, Wiltshire, to access horticulture and growing cut flowers as a therapeutic activity.

Contact sophiagrowsflowers@gmail.com
Instagram @sophiagrows_

> I'm happy to let dandelions grow for bees. My little boy loves blowing the clocks, so the pure joy they provide for him means they are welcome



FACT FILE

What A genus of around 25 species of exotic-looking tuberous herbaceous perennials, from the Zingiberaceae family.
Season Mid-spring to late summer, usually beyond.
Size Height varies from 30-60cm. Size of clump depends on the species and growing conditions.
Conditions Dappled or part shade and moisture-retentive, free-draining soil.
Origins The Himalayas and parts of China.
Hardiness Hardy throughout most of the UK and suitable for gardens in USDA zones 6a to 8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

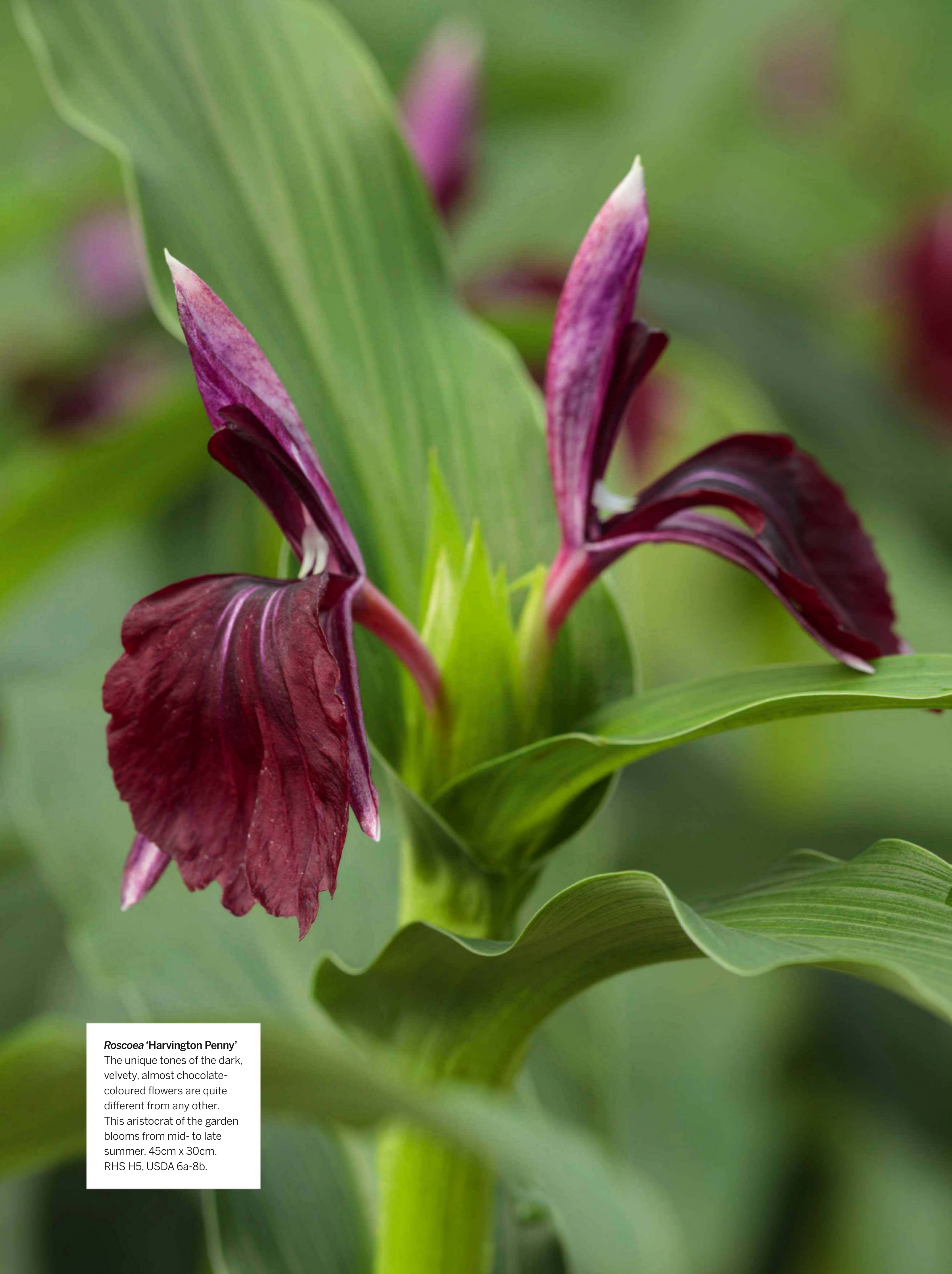
Roscoea **'Harvington Rose'**
A new Harvington introduction, named for Hugh Nunn's mother. It has delicate white flowers with exquisite, orange-pink, tissue-thin lips. Similar to 'Harvington Polly' but a deeper pink. Height and spread: 45cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b†.

Roscoea purpurea* f. *rubra
'Gurkha Redstem'
Often sold as *R.* 'Red Gurkha', this has brick-red flowers from mid- to late summer, and wavy-edged leaves. Green-stemmed forms are taller (reaching 35cm) while red-stemmed are more compact. 25cm x 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

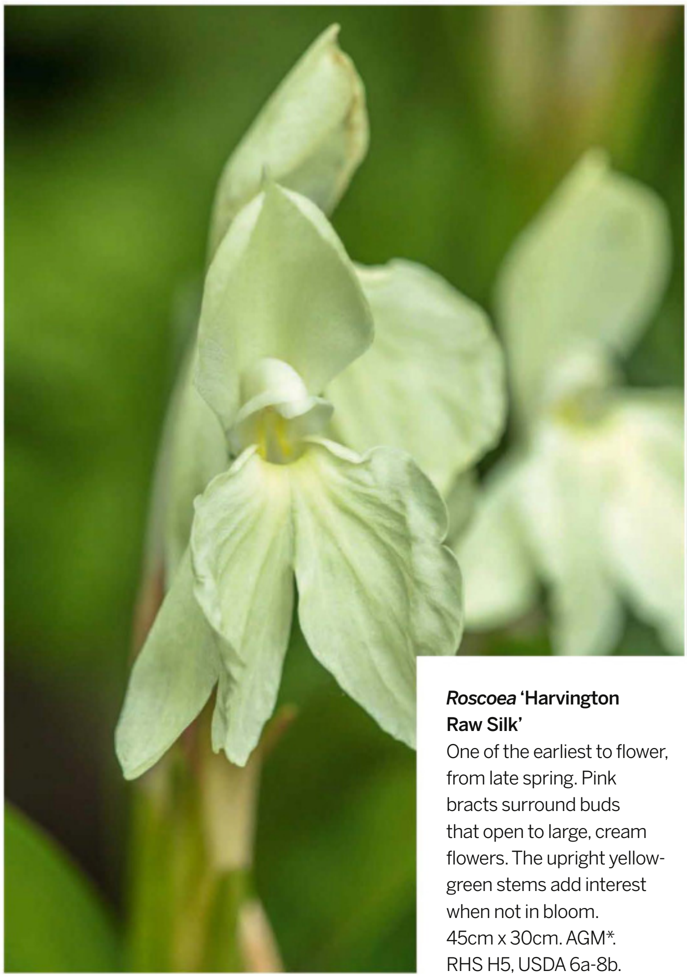
ROSCOEA

With their orchid-like blooms, these exotic-looking hardy perennials bring welcome colour to shady areas from late spring to autumn

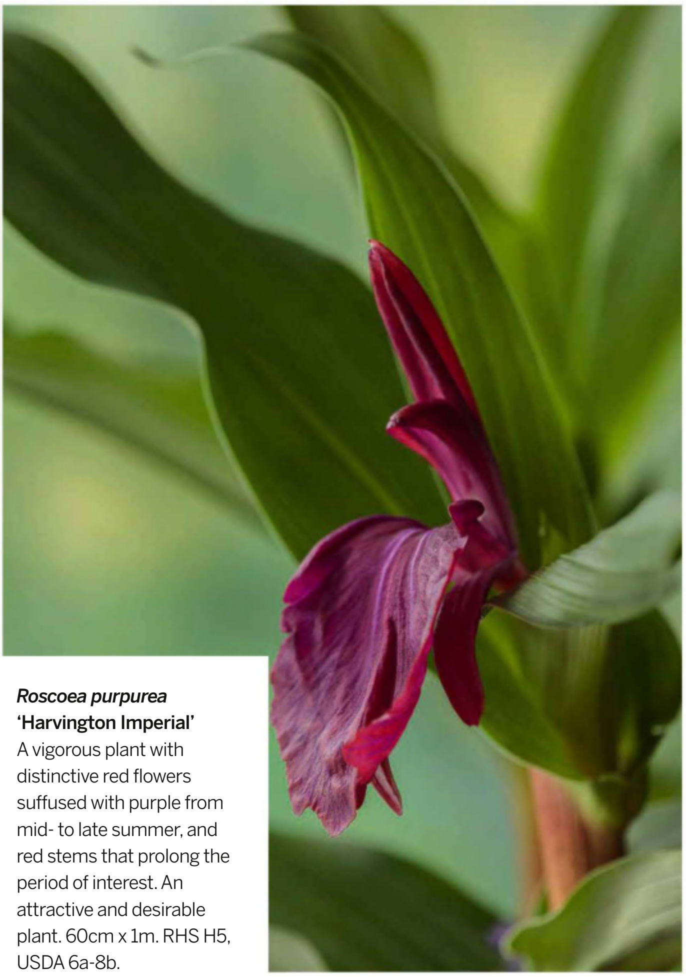
WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLIVE NICHOLS**



***Roscoea* 'Harvington Penny'**
The unique tones of the dark, velvety, almost chocolate-coloured flowers are quite different from any other. This aristocrat of the garden blooms from mid- to late summer. 45cm x 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



Roscoea **'Harvington Raw Silk'**
One of the earliest to flower, from late spring. Pink bracts surround buds that open to large, cream flowers. The upright yellow-green stems add interest when not in bloom. 45cm x 30cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



Roscoea purpurea **'Harvington Imperial'**
A vigorous plant with distinctive red flowers suffused with purple from mid- to late summer, and red stems that prolong the period of interest. An attractive and desirable plant. 60cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

Mention the ginger family and your mind instantly turns to exotics from the tropics with their flamboyant flowers and bracts. In temperate climes, you may be reminded of *Cautleya spicata*, a stalwart of exotic borders, but there are also other glamorous relations that should be more widely planted. These include roscoeas, which have a form and flower reminiscent of exotic orchids. A host of delectable new hybrids and ease of cultivation means that everyone can welcome this exquisite, connoisseurs' plant into their own garden.

There are 25 species of *Roscoea*, plus assorted hybrids and cultivars, with clusters or single orchid-like flowers topping stems formed of overlapping leaf bases. These hardy perennials, which flower from mid-spring to late summer, hail from the high-altitude, cool-temperate Himalayas and parts of southwest China, where the monsoon climate dictates they become dormant during the dry winters, and flower when the rains arrive. Most bloom in temperate climes from early summer to midsummer, but careful selection extends the season from mid-spring until early autumn.

The genus was named for William Roscoe (1753-1832) by Sir James Edward Smith, founder of the Linnean Society, in his *Exotic Botany* of 1806. It was described from a specimen of *Roscoea purpurea* sent from the botanical gardens in Kolkata to Liverpool, which flowered in 1821. Roscoe, the son of a market gardener and publican, rose to become a prominent banker, historian, politician, artist, patron of the arts and a leading figure in Liverpool. He is notable in the plant world for being instrumental in the creation of Liverpool Botanic Gardens, founded by public subscription in 1802. He was also a specialist in gingers.

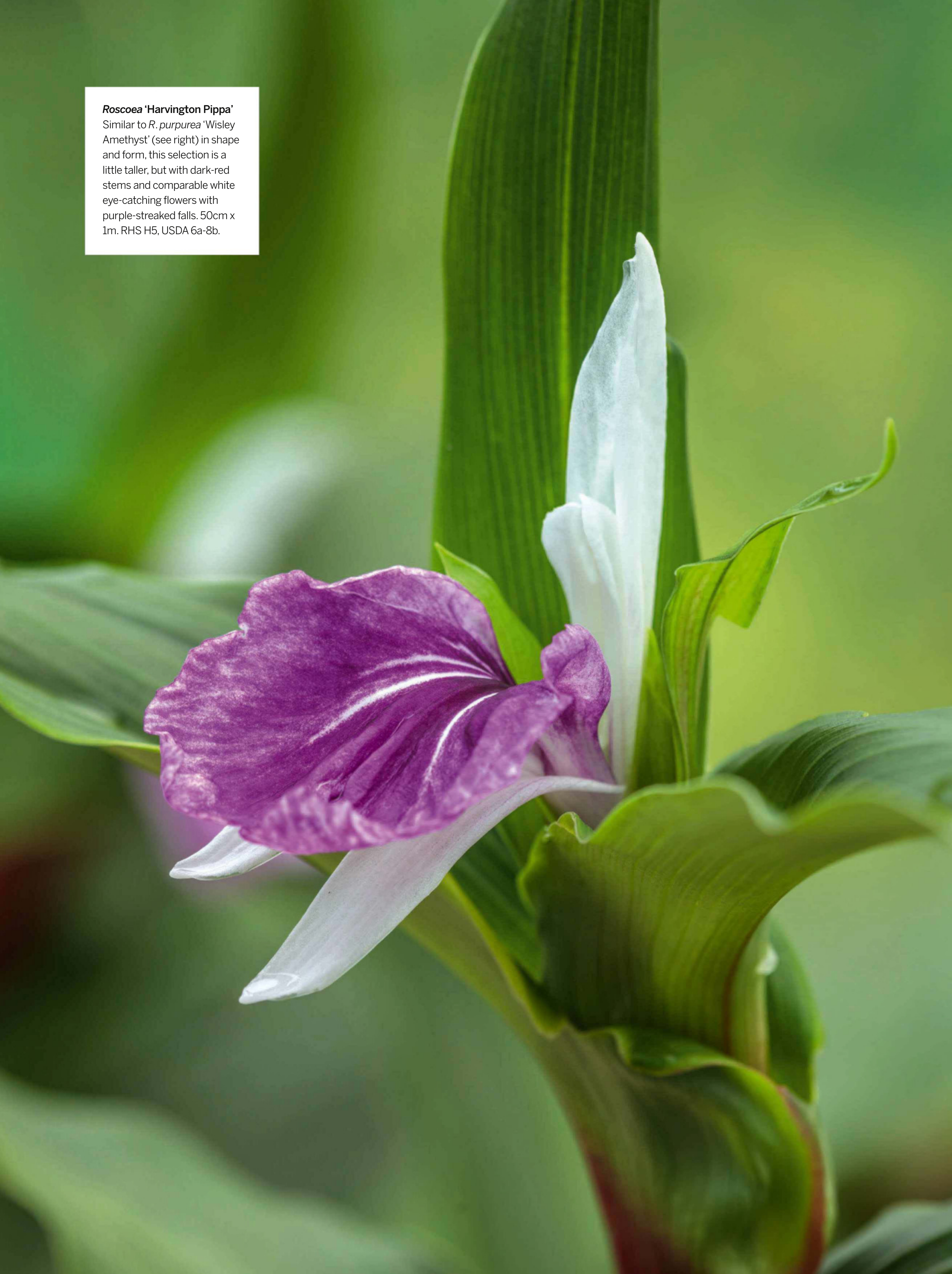
Several early collections of *Roscoea* were named for people, including *R. humeana*, which first bloomed at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and was named for one of its gardeners, David Hume, who was killed in the First World War; and a yellow-flowered form of *R. cautleyoides*, now believed to be 'Jeffrey Thomas', which was named for the propagator's son. The Scottish plant explorer George Forrest (1873-1932) found this form, which flowers from late spring to midsummer, growing in pine and oak forests alongside *R. purpurea* in Yunnan, China.

The traditional colour palette of purple, pink, yellow and white was revolutionised with the more recent discovery of *R. purpurea* f. *rubra* on a 1992 expedition to central Nepal. This astonishing red form was discovered in a single, isolated population, among open scrub and steep terrace walls, with no other species or forms nearby.

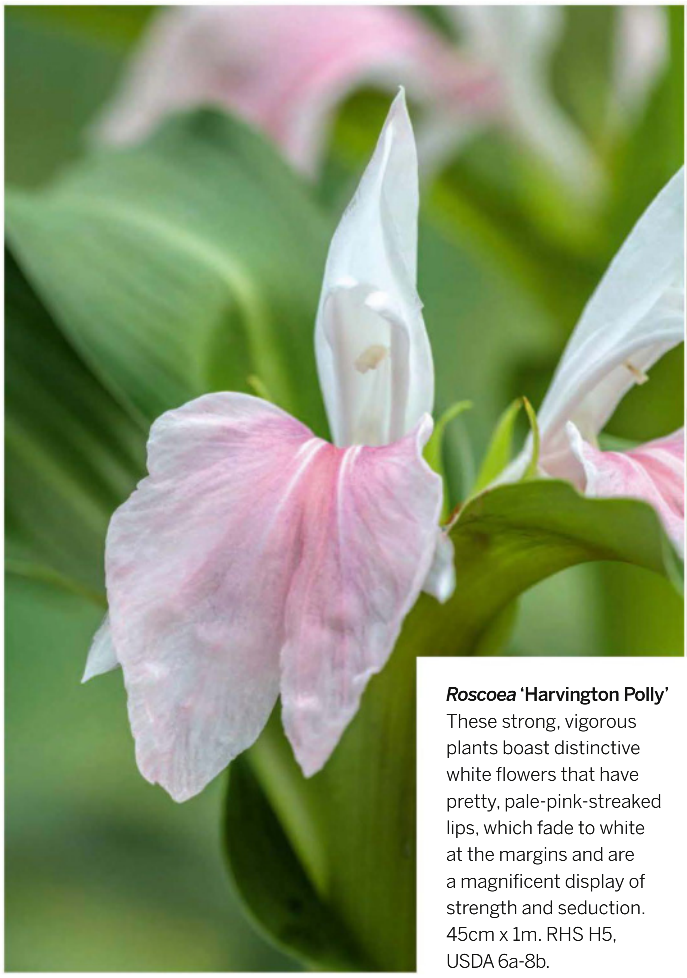
This exciting colour break opened up unique opportunities for hybridisation. In the mid-1990s, nurseryman Hugh Nunn, who was already well known for his Harvington hellebores, crossed two ▷

> A host of delectable new hybrids means that everyone can welcome this exquisite plant into their garden

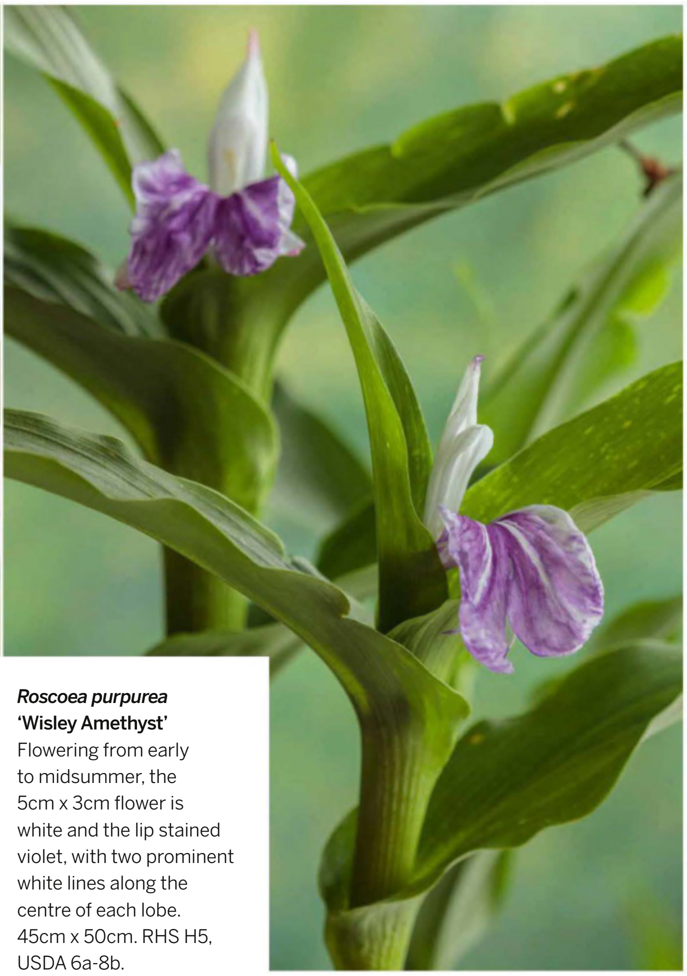
To continue turn to page 45



***Roscoea* 'Harvington Pippa'**
Similar to *R. purpurea* 'Wisley Amethyst' (see right) in shape and form, this selection is a little taller, but with dark-red stems and comparable white eye-catching flowers with purple-streaked falls. 50cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



***Roscoea* 'Harvington Polly'**
These strong, vigorous plants boast distinctive white flowers that have pretty, pale-pink-streaked lips, which fade to white at the margins and are a magnificent display of strength and seduction. 45cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



***Roscoea purpurea* 'Wisley Amethyst'**
Flowering from early to midsummer, the 5cm x 3cm flower is white and the lip stained violet, with two prominent white lines along the centre of each lobe. 45cm x 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

How to grow *Roscoea*

- **Rosceas are best planted as freshly lifted tubers** from mid-April to mid-July, or as containerised plants at any time of year.

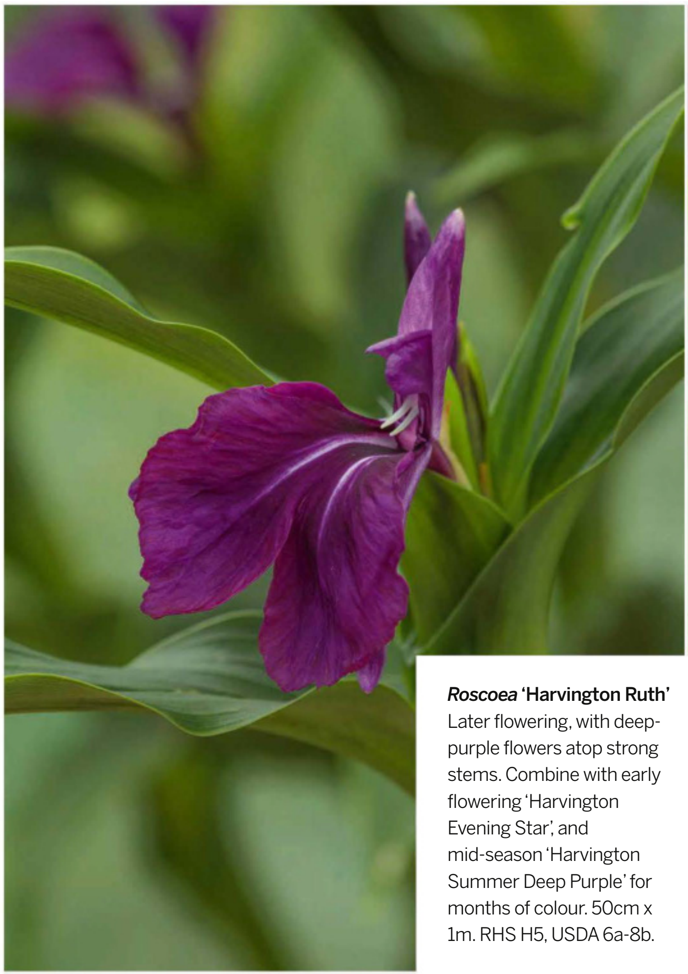
- **Plant at a depth of 10-15cm**, with the crown facing upwards and tubers pointing downwards, in humus-rich, free-draining compost that holds moisture in summer but isn't waterlogged in winter. Roscoeas need plenty of water when in growth, so water before the onset of drought if needed. Fork in sharp sand, grit and well-rotted organic matter to improve growing conditions on heavier soils and allow to settle before planting. They will tolerate acidic or alkaline conditions, though a pH of around 6.5 is considered best.

- **Ideally, plant in dappled or part shade,** which provides light for the shoots, but keeps roots cool and moist. In dry air and excessive hot sunshine, especially if combined with a lack of water, plants will wilt. Prolonged exposure to such conditions gradually weakens and, unless remedied, can kill the plant.

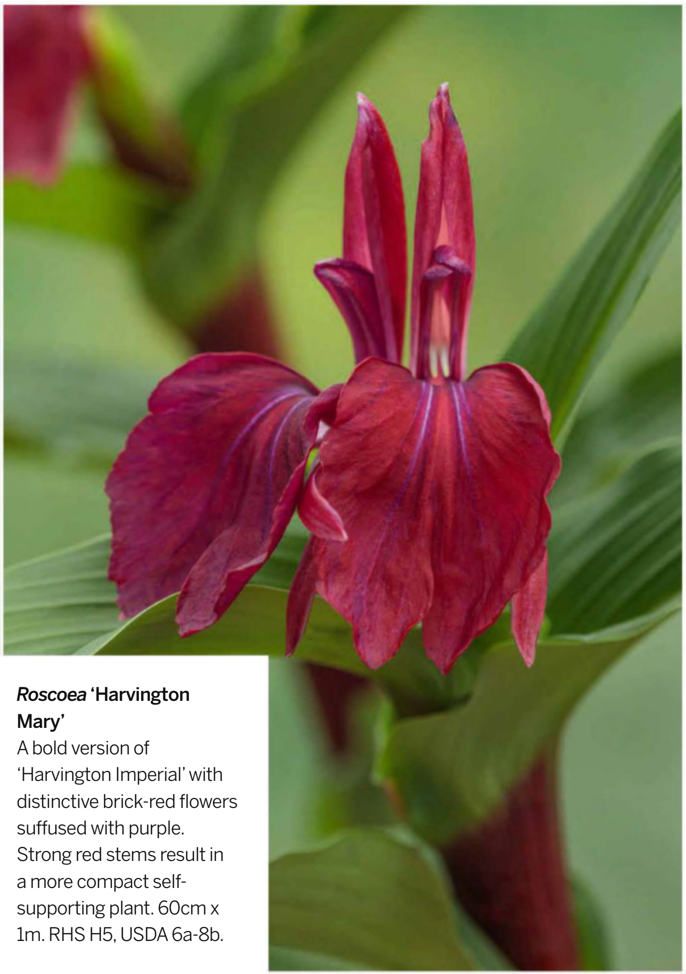
- **Established plants will happily self-seed and form clumps.** Once these have become congested, they should be divided in late autumn when the leaves have died back. Cut off remaining leaves, wash off the soil, ease the clumps apart until you have several clumps, and replant from 10-20cm apart depending on height and vigour. Add a mulch of fine bark to protect them from winter cold. Use labels or canes to mark the spot where they are planted, as some don't appear until mid-June.

- **Roscoeas can be grown in containers.** Fill the pot with peat-free, multi-purpose compost until the crown is raised to the depth that you would plant it in a garden. Add compost around and above the tubers, then tap the pot several times on a hard surface to settle the compost and remove air pockets. Water well after planting and through the growing season, but avoid waterlogging in winter. Raising the pot will improve drainage. Feed container plants in spring with a high-potash general fertiliser.

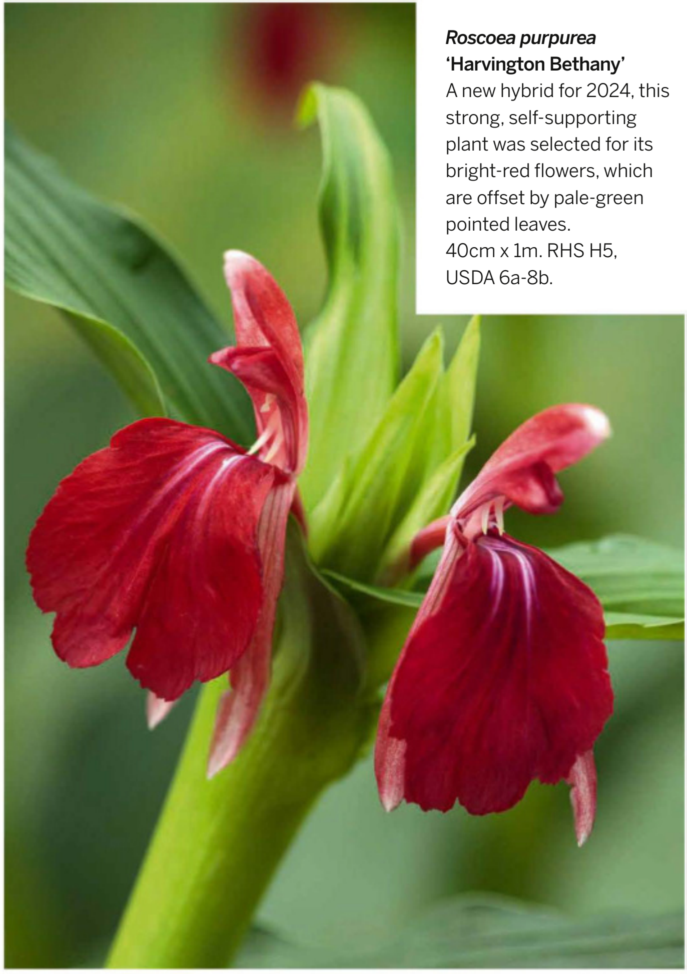
- **Roscoeas self-seed freely in favourable conditions.** Seed should be collected and sown fresh. Germination can be erratic but soaking older seed for 24 hours before sowing helps. Sow in loam-based seed mix, cover the surface with a layer of grit, then water from below. Seeds need a period of chilling to germinate. Put pots outdoors over winter but keep the compost moist, then move to a greenhouse in spring to protect emerging seedlings before transferring to individual pots. Flowering takes three to four years.



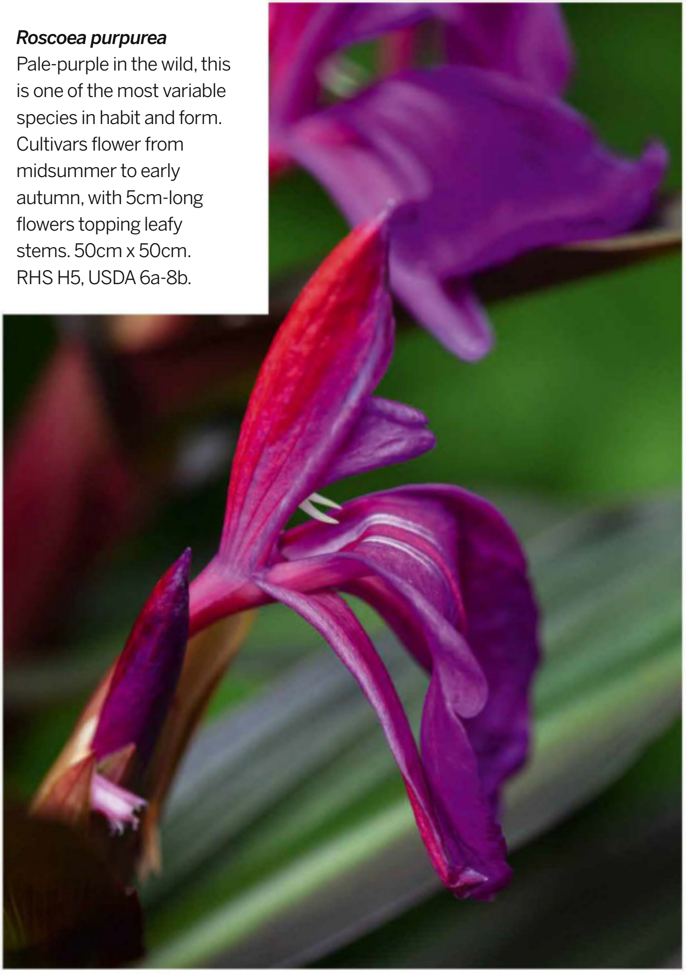
***Roscoea* 'Harvington Ruth'**
Later flowering, with deep-purple flowers atop strong stems. Combine with early flowering 'Harvington Evening Star', and mid-season 'Harvington Summer Deep Purple' for months of colour. 50cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



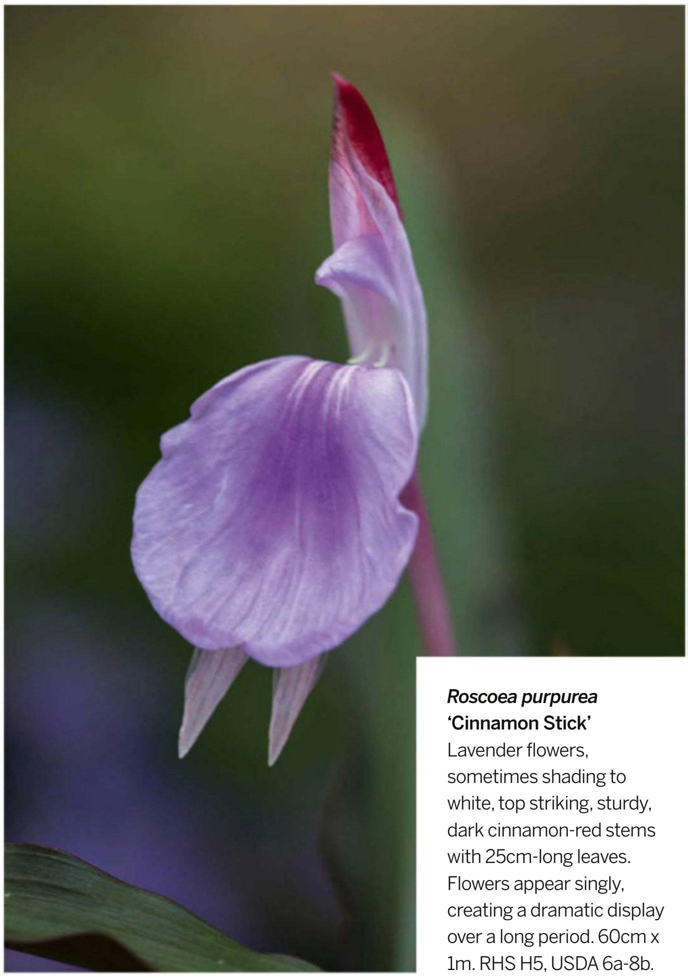
***Roscoea* 'Harvington Mary'**
A bold version of 'Harvington Imperial' with distinctive brick-red flowers suffused with purple. Strong red stems result in a more compact self-supporting plant. 60cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



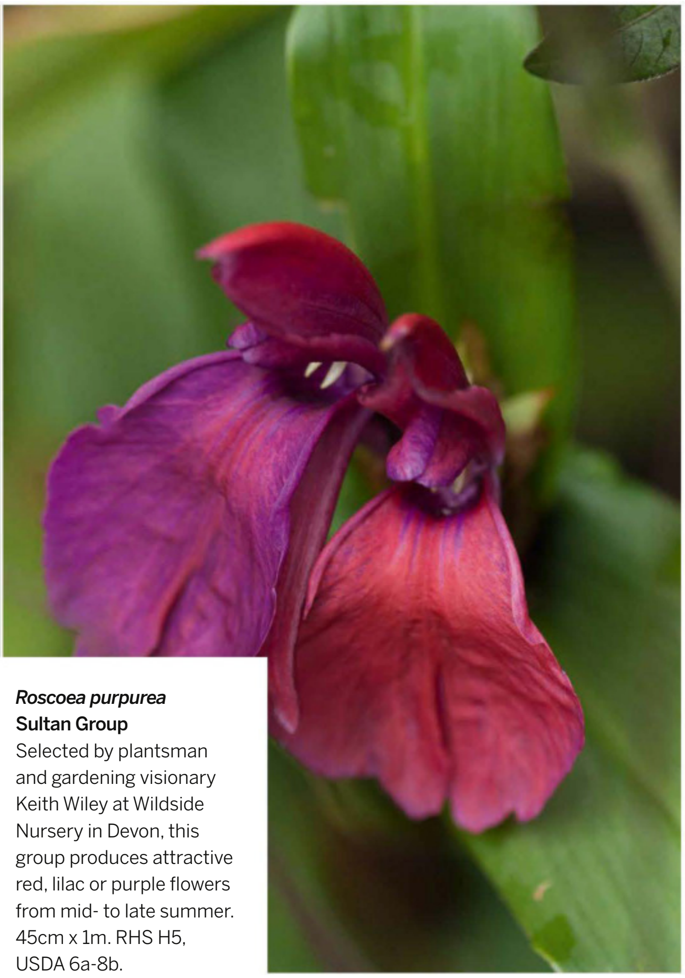
***Roscoea purpurea* 'Harvington Bethany'**
A new hybrid for 2024, this strong, self-supporting plant was selected for its bright-red flowers, which are offset by pale-green pointed leaves. 40cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



Roscoea purpurea
Pale-purple in the wild, this is one of the most variable species in habit and form. Cultivars flower from midsummer to early autumn, with 5cm-long flowers topping leafy stems. 50cm x 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



***Roscoea purpurea* 'Cinnamon Stick'**
Lavender flowers, sometimes shading to white, top striking, sturdy, dark cinnamon-red stems with 25cm-long leaves. Flowers appear singly, creating a dramatic display over a long period. 60cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



***Roscoea purpurea* Sultan Group**
Selected by plantsman and gardening visionary Keith Wiley at Wildside Nursery in Devon, this group produces attractive red, lilac or purple flowers from mid- to late summer. 45cm x 1m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

▷ species: compact *R. humeana,* with flowers in tones of purple, and *R. cautleyoides*, with cream-coloured flowers. The best of these – *R.* 'Harvington Evening Star', *R.* 'Harvington Raw Silk' and *R.* 'Harvington Royale – have long been must-have plants.

In 2000, Hugh was gifted *R. purpurea* f. *rubra* by a friend while he was propagating *R. purpurea* 'Wisley Amethyst' for the RHS bicentenary celebrations. The flowering times of the two plants overlapped and this serendipity became the catalyst for a second selection programme. The best of these, *R.* 'Harvington Imperial', is being followed by a new generation of later-flowering forms that are being released throughout 2024. Selected by Hugh and his daughter, Penny, who now runs their nursery Twelve Nunns, they are named for female members of his family. Among the treasures are 'Harvington Bethany' and 'Harvington Polly', named for two of Hugh's granddaughters.

Roscoeas are at home in woodland gardens or in well-drained rock gardens, where their roots can grow in damp shade under the rocks. *R. cautleyoides* is most tolerant of sunshine, while *R. scillifolia*, flowering from mid- to late summer, is one of the most vigorous, especially the pink-flowered forms.

Roscoeas are at home in woodland gardens, where their roots can grow in damp shade

The first to flower, from late spring, is *R. cautleyoides*, followed by *R. humeana*, both heralding the main flowering season; providing the weather is not too hot and dry they can still be in bloom in early autumn. *Roscoea purpurea*, the last to appear, emerges in late spring, then flowers from mid- to late summer. Cool, wet summers often prompt a second flowering of early flowering cultivars.

Roscoeas combine well with woodland ferns, such as *Dryopteris erythrosora* with its brick-red young fronds, the red and orange leaves of *Anemanthele lessoniana* in summer and autumn, or *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau', an evergreen, mound-forming grass. Equally companionable are hardy geraniums such as *Geranium wallichianum* 'Buxton's Variety', *G. clarkei* 'Kashmir White' or the later-flowering *G.* 'Ann Folkard'. On rock gardens and screes, sedums, such as the succulent, silvery-grey leaved *Sedum spathulifolium* 'Purpureum' and carpeting saxifrages make pleasing companions. ❑

Matthew Biggs is a garden writer and broadcaster.

Where to see and buy

- **Farmyard Nurseries** Dol Llan Road, Llandysul, Ceredigion SA44 4RL. Tel 01559 363389, farmyardnurseries.co.uk
- **Twelve Nunns Nursery** Tel 01778 590455, twelvenunns.co.uk Mail order only.

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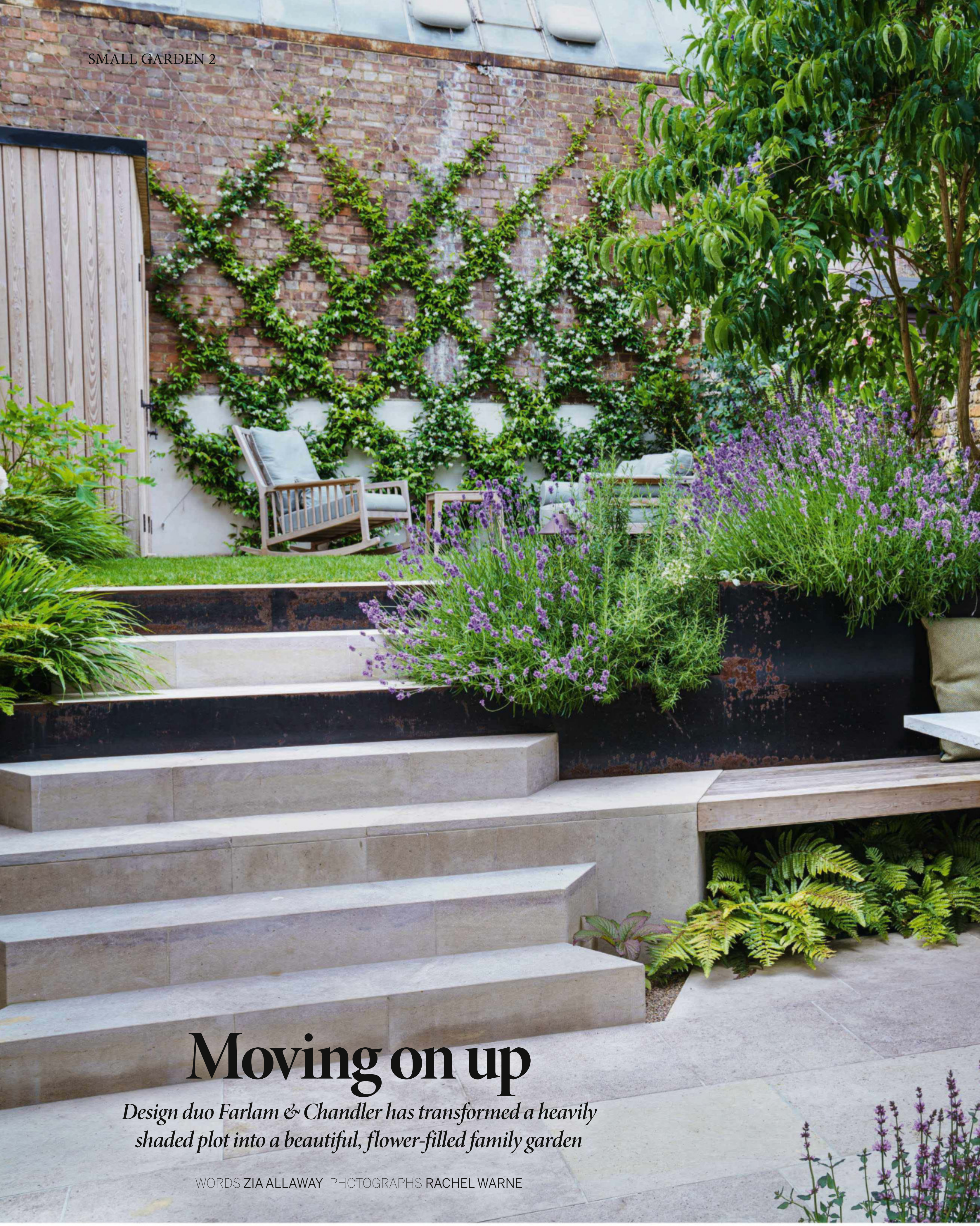


Moving on up

Design duo Farlam & Chandler has transformed a heavily shaded plot into a beautiful, flower-filled family garden

WORDS ZIA ALLAWAY PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

The designers created a seamless transition between the new kitchen extension and an outdoor dining area, shaded by a *Heptacodium miconioides* tree and softened with colourful foliage and flowers, while the bold *Trachelospermum jasminoides* pattern on the back wall draws you up to the sheltered lounge area.

IN BRIEF

What Compact city garden with diamond-patterned jasmine wall feature, ragged-edged lawn, flower borders, lounge area and built-in seating.
Where London.
Size 12.5m x 6m.
Soil London clay.
Aspect West-facing.
Designed by Farlam & Chandler (farlamandchandler.com).

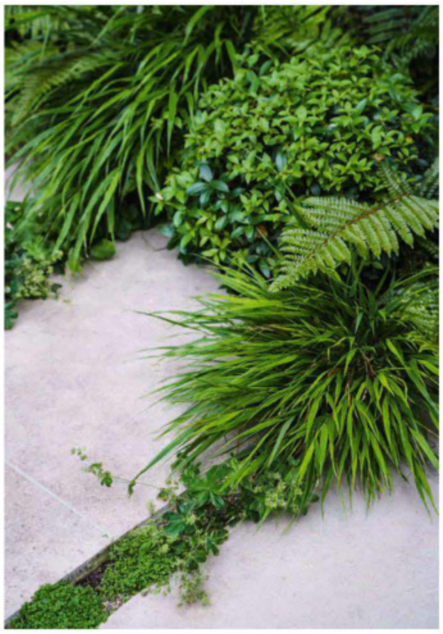
Overlooking a quiet leafy square in the heart of Hackney, east London, the Grade II-listed villa that newlyweds Tom and Emily bought in 2018 offered the period features and space they needed to create their dream family home. A new glass-fronted extension to the lower-ground floor opened up the kitchen and dining area, but once the building work was complete, the couple found themselves looking out on to a small, dark, inhospitable garden with a patchy lawn and a forest of self-seeded trees. “There wasn’t anywhere to sit and the trees made it too shady,” says Emily. “And when we tried to put in some new plants, they just died. It was at that point we realised we needed a fresh start.”

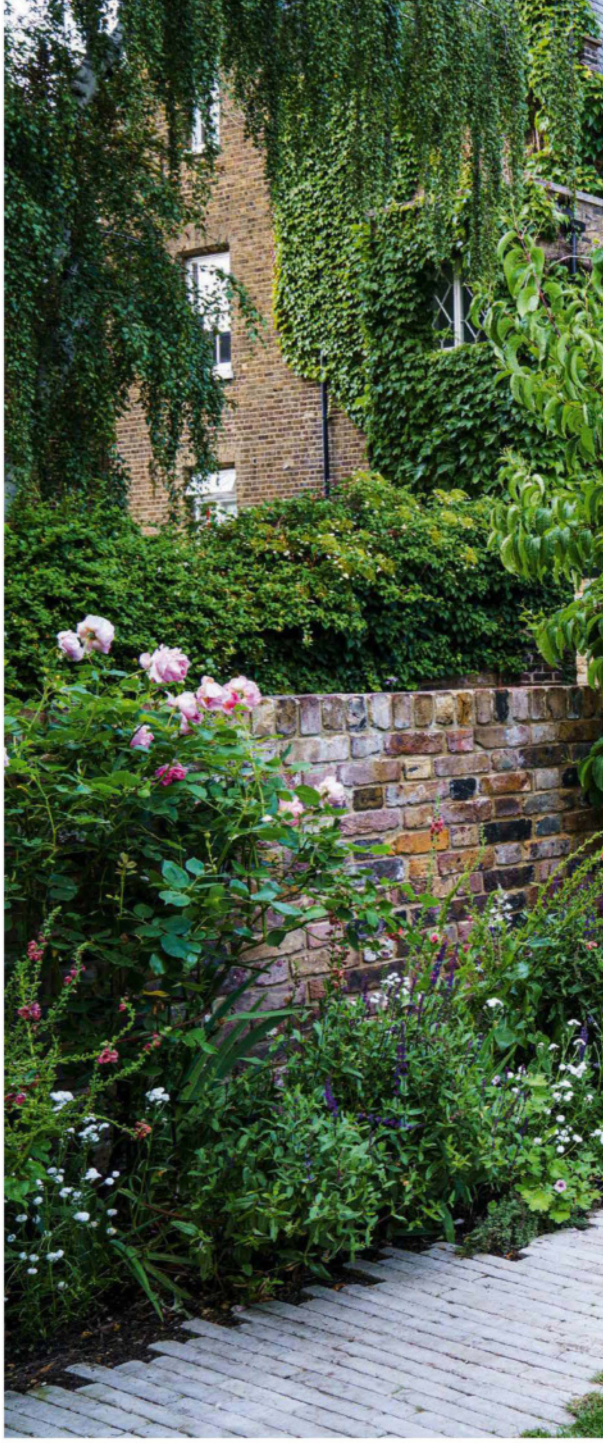
Garden designers Harriet Farlam and Ben Chandler, of Farlam & Chandler, were introduced to the couple by their interior designer All & Nxthing, and came on board with a brief to create a sanctuary that could be enjoyed throughout the year.

“The garden is on a slope and we wanted to utilise the level changes to create a series of functional spaces,” explains Harriet. “Emily and Tom also asked us for a planting palette in soft peach, pink and plum tones to remind them of their wedding flowers, as well as space to display their sculptures.”

The designers divided the plot into three distinct areas: a paved dining terrace connecting the garden to the kitchen; steps leading up to a small lawn and planted borders; and a gravelled lounge area at the back that traps the morning sun. “Inspired by the marriage of historic and contemporary elements in the house, we used the pattern of the leading of the Jacobean-style windows in the arrangement of the outdoor spaces and hard landscape detailing, as well as the plant feature on the back wall,” says ▷

Ferns beneath the seat and *Mentha requienii* between the pavers on the dining terrace provide yet more layers of interest





▷ Ben. "We also created a layered planting scheme that immerses you in greenery as you look out from the extension. The generous proportions and wide steps help to create the illusion of space, and by training scented climbing roses and jasmine on to the vertical surfaces, we've packed lots of flowers into a small area, without blocking out too much sunlight."

While the need for privacy is often an issue in small town gardens, Emily and Tom wanted to establish a connection with their neighbours and retained a low wall on one side. "We replaced the big trees with smaller ones, such as the *Heptacodium miconioides*, so that we have some privacy but can also chat over the wall," says Emily.

The planting palette chosen by the designers offers a blend of leafy evergreens, including the star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), lavender and ferns (*Polypodium vulgare* 'Bifidocristatum' and *Polystichum polyblepharum*), together with flowering perennials that deliver seasonal colour, such as hardy geraniums, mallow (*Malva* x *clementii* 'Bredon Springs'), salvias, astrantias and others in the soft pastels Emily and Tom requested. The flowering season is also extended with a layer of bulbs, including narcissi, tulips, alliums and *Ornithogalum*, in the same colour palette.

One of the most striking features in the garden is the planting design on the back wall, which catches the eye from inside the house, enticing visitors to venture out to take a closer look. "This is a simple idea but has great impact," says Harriet. "It's created with five scented star jasmines (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) planted at the base of tension wires fixed in a diagonal pattern to the wall. The plants are then trained up the wires and trimmed about once a month in summer to maintain the effect."

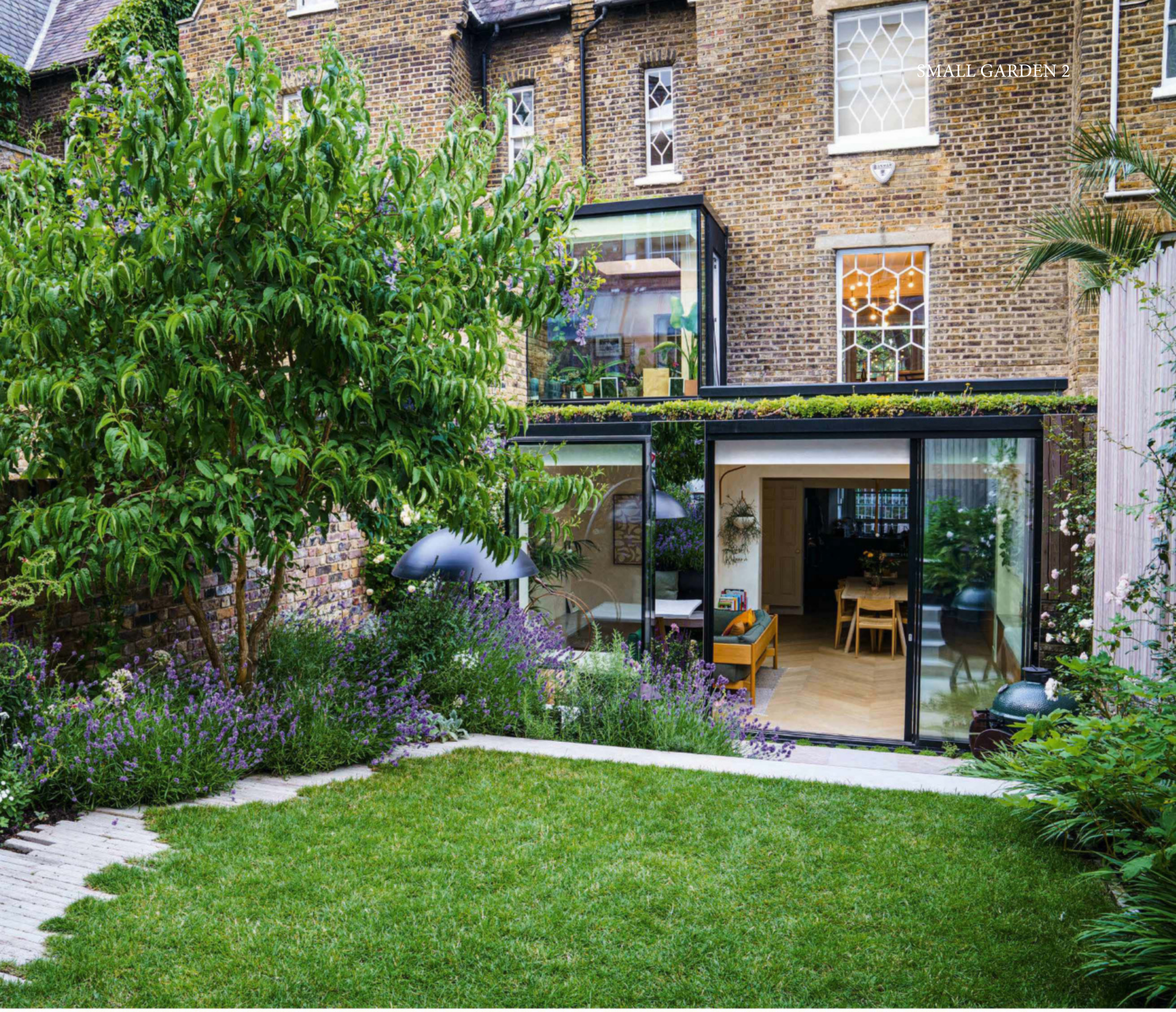
The attention to detail creates a multisensory experience as you walk through the garden. The edges of the steps are set at 120 degrees, reflecting the pattern of the leading in the windows, while the retaining wall for the lawn terrace is made from a sheet of steel that continues across the risers, unifying the elements with bands of colour and texture. "The steps also bleed into the built-in timber benches, offering more casual seating when guests arrive," says Harriet. "The ferns beneath the seat and Corsican mint (*Mentha requienii*) between the pavers on the dining terrace provide yet more layers of interest."

Beyond the steps, Purbeck limestone pavers in a staggered pattern form an organic, informal path that creates an element of surprise as you walk through the space, and allowed the designers to squeeze in even more plants. "The shape of the lawn also mirrors the leading in the Jacobean-style windows, linking it with other features in the garden, while the feathered edges bring a sense of softness to offset what is otherwise a bold, architectural layout," says Ben.

Harriet and Ben always consider the impact their gardens will have on the environment, and here they sourced the limestone from a quarry in the Purbeck hills and used waste off-cuts from the same stone to make the pavers for the path next to the lawn. "Nearly 50 per cent of the total garden area is planted, and the gravel and lawn are permeable, while the run-off from the hard surfaces goes into the borders rather than mains drainage, helping to prevent localised flooding and pollution," says Harriet.

Owner Emily says the new design has revolutionised the way the family use the garden. "We're outside whenever the weather allows, and it was especially lovely last summer when we had a newborn, and I could sit for hours in the rocking chair with him in a shady spot while our toddler played on the lawn. We also use the dining table from spring to autumn, thanks to a Heatsail lamp, and love the unexpected planting – the little ferns under the bench, the roses growing up behind the barbecue, and the big flowerbed right by the window, which means that even in winter we look out on to a sea of green."

The designers have also incorporated some of the plants the couple had in pots, including roses they were given as wedding presents and hydrangeas from Emily's grandmother. "These plants are so precious to us and they look like they've always been here, which is a testament to Ben and Harriet's thoughtful design." ❑



Top left Planting adorns every crack and crevice in the garden, with spaces between the pavers on the dining terrace filled with *Alchemilla alpina*, *Hakonechloa macra*, the Japanese lace fern (*Polystichum polyblepharum*) and Corsican mint (*Mentha requienii*).

Above Looking back to the house from the sun terrace, the feather-edged lawn and path flank cottage-style planting that includes Emily's roses, saved from the couple's previous home, together with a skirt of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead', *Achillea ptarmica* 'Peter Cottontail' and the spiralling seedheads of *Verbascum* 'Petra'.

Left Owners Emily and Tom love the way the planting butts up to the kitchen, providing them with an evolving show throughout the year. In summer, highlights include pink *Malva* x *clementii* 'Bredon Springs' and a pink agastache alongside the violet-blue spikes of *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'. The Dome lamp from Heatsail also allows the family to extend the time they spend outside.

TERESA MOLLER

The Chilean landscape architect on taking inspiration from the natural world, the pleasures of working around the globe and the importance of planting more trees

WORDS JIMENA MARTIGNONI PORTRAIT JOHN CAMPBELL

Chile, where Teresa Moller grew up, is a long country of many varied landscapes framed by the Andes mountains to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Her first memories of the natural world, from family camping trips, are of desert and woodlands; landscapes that shaped in her an intimate connection to nature. "I always felt that the mountains meant strong protection, the forest was shelter, and the ocean and the desert immensity," she says. "I believe Chile is a country where nature expresses itself in a very dramatic and powerful way, and this profound feeling dwells within every one of us Chileans."

Although she is of Danish and Spanish ancestry, Teresa's identity seems strongly rooted in the essence of the Chilean land. This love of nature is what, in the end, remains as an unmistakable imprint on every one of her designs.

> TREES ARE ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS TO THE PLANET. I WOULD LOVE TO ADD AS MANY AS POSSIBLE

Following her studies in garden design at the New York Botanical Garden, she set up her own office in Santiago de Chile in 1986, and quite rapidly became a prominent figure in Latin-American landscape architecture.

Her first significant project, in the hilly areas of Santiago, featured a series of abandoned pools and tanks – part of an old water-collection system fed by local streams – running down a natural 15m elevation. Taking advantage of the existing slopes, she rebuilt the pools with stone to receive the water that had been concealed by trees and shrubs and that was rediscovered after clearing up the site.

"The water was always there, we just allowed it to run freely again," she says. "My oldest daughter was a baby at the time I first started to work there, and I used to visit the site with her strapped to my back. Now both my daughter and the project are more than 20 years old and they are both flourishing."

For Teresa, every one of her designs has to be based on what is already there and the spirit of the land being worked on, and her aim is always to bring people closer to the experience of nature. "We need to let nature surprise us and show us how a territory can grow and bring forth new life in a harmonious and sustainable way, without artificial impositions."

In this sense, her best-known project, Punta Pite, is the perfect representation of what she does. A path sculpted around dramatic cliffs by the Pacific Ocean, it has featured in publications around the world, and was the starting point for her own "laboratory".

After working for months with the stone craftsmen who constructed the path, she naturally "fell in love with the site", as she describes it, and started building her own summer retreat in the area. Her house and plot, perched on a slope severely damaged by road construction, became an experimental spot for native and non-native, drought-tolerant coastal plants. Restoration was Teresa's ultimate goal, and by observing, trying, planting and growing plants for more than 15 years, she has turned the once-wounded land into a flourishing ecosystem, which has naturally integrated pioneer native species living in an adjacent creek.

The most significant moments in her career include being on the jury of the Barcelona Biennial, lecturing across Europe, Australia, and China and, in 2021, receiving the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture sponsored by UNESCO in recognition of her work. "I am delighted to be able to work on different scales and in different places around the world, because it helps me to understand and study how each place has its own character, identity and shape," she says.

A standout achievement for her was being invited to create a site-specific work for the Venice Biennale in 2016. Made of discarded pieces of travertine found in quarries of northern Chile, the composition leads the visitor to rest by the waterfront. The following year, she was invited to the International Garden Exhibition in Germany, where she recreated a forest from southern Chile with *Nothofagus antarctica*, an ancient tree that is representative of southern latitudes of the planet and well-suited to the environmental conditions found in Berlin.

"Trees are one of the greatest gifts to the planet," says Teresa. "Having the possibility to plant so many trees, I feel, is my humble contribution." As a personal endeavour, she started a pistachio plantation in 2014 on a family-owned piece of land outside Santiago, now with 5,500 trees and running a small business selling home-grown roasted pistachios.

Regarding upcoming projects, she expresses her desire to work in public spaces and anticipates a large tree-planting proposal for soil restoration and boosting urban biodiversity in Chile's Metropolitan Region. Based on the Miyawaki method, which mimics the way a forest would recolonise itself to create dense urban mini woodlands that require minimal maintenance, this plan aims to create pocket forests in the city. "I would love this to come to fruition and to add as many trees as possible to urban environments." □

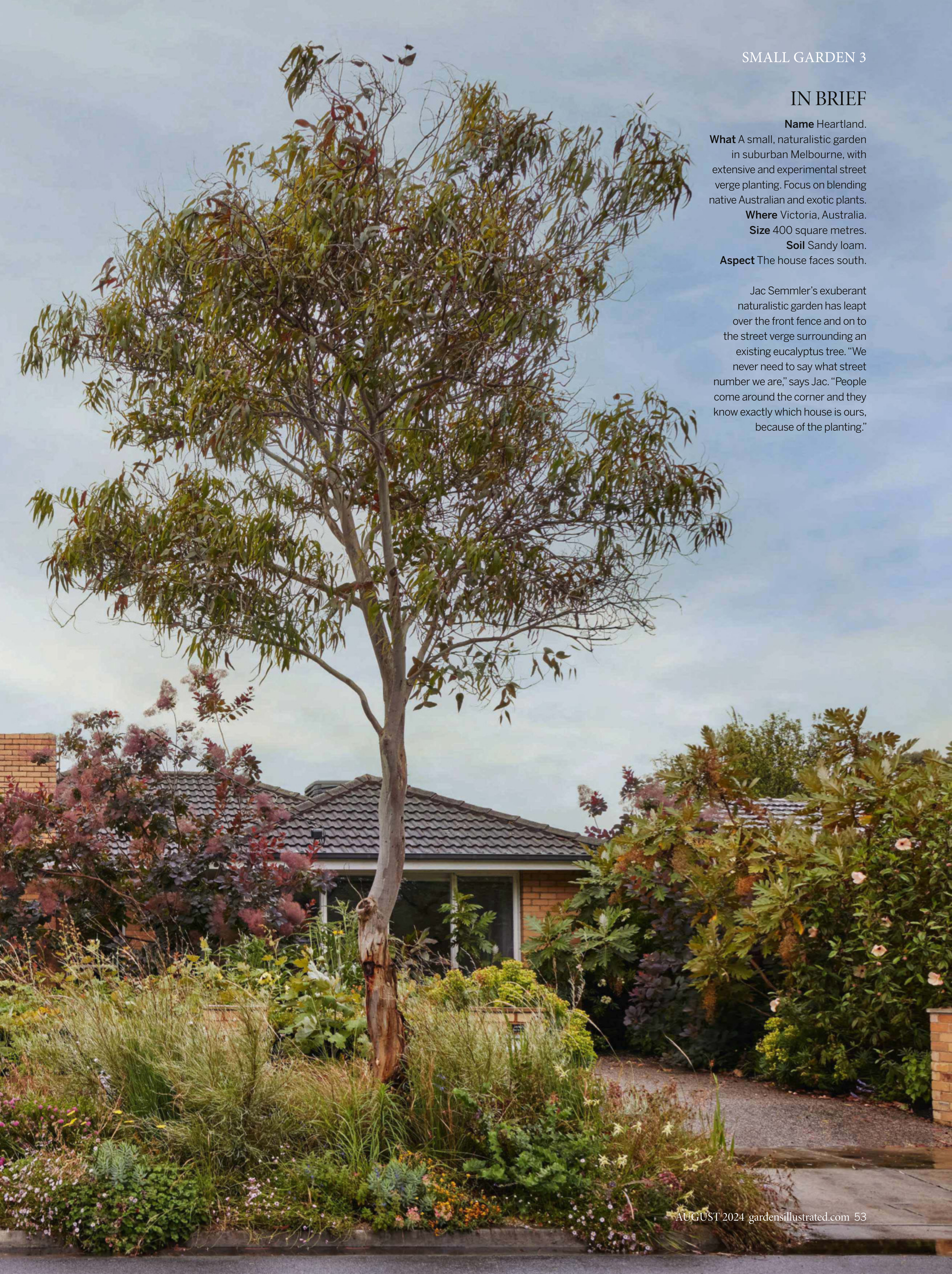
USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Teresa Moller's work at **teresamoller.cl/en/**

STREET LIFE

In the middle of suburbia, Super Bloom's founder Jac Semmler has created a floral wonderland that spills out on to the street

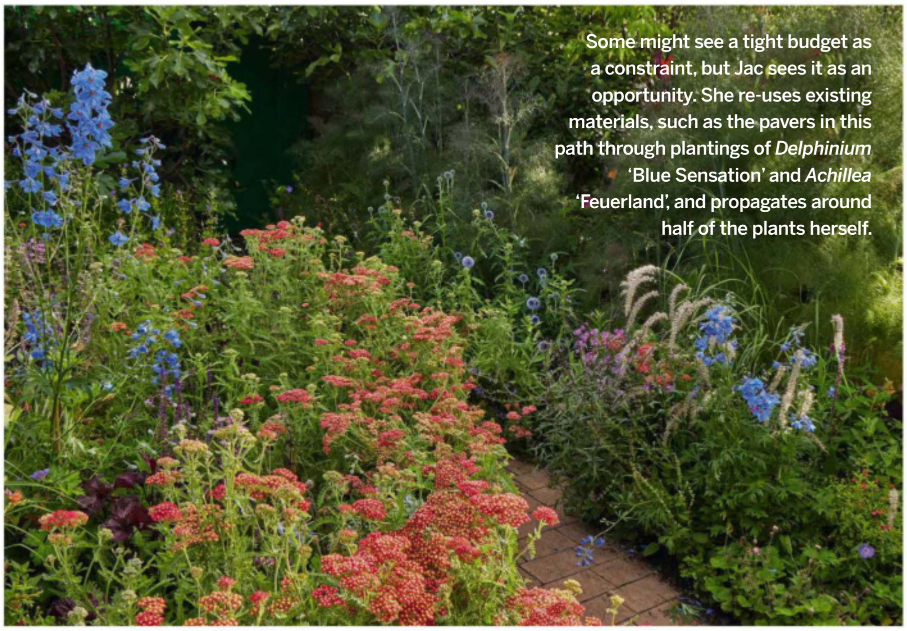
WORDS **GEORGINA REID** PHOTOGRAPHS **CAITLIN ATKINSON**



IN BRIEF

Name Heartland.
What A small, naturalistic garden in suburban Melbourne, with extensive and experimental street verge planting. Focus on blending native Australian and exotic plants.
Where Victoria, Australia.
Size 400 square metres.
Soil Sandy loam.
Aspect The house faces south.

Jac Semmler's exuberant naturalistic garden has leapt over the front fence and on to the street verge surrounding an existing eucalyptus tree. "We never need to say what street number we are," says Jac. "People come around the corner and they know exactly which house is ours, because of the planting."



Some might see a tight budget as a constraint, but Jac sees it as an opportunity. She re-uses existing materials, such as the pavers in this path through plantings of *Delphinium* 'Blue Sensation' and *Achillea* 'Feuerland', and propagates around half of the plants herself.

Neighbours of all backgrounds really love the garden, and often have very insightful observations about it

Six years ago it might have been possible for a plant lover to drive past the red-brick house on the corner block in Melbourne's southern suburb of Frankston without causing a traffic incident. Low brick fence, neatly mowed grass verge, front lawn bordered by clipped shrubs: nothing to see here. But then, in 2019, Jac Semmler and her partner Matt moved in. The front lawn was soon ripped up, the concrete slab suffocating the backyard broken up, and in came the plants. Thousands of plants. Now, it's impossible to miss.

Jac is one of the most enthusiastic plant people you'll ever meet. She's a qualified horticulturist and educator, and founder of Super Bloom, which brings horticultural expertise to projects ranging in scale from residential gardens to art installations and public domain projects. She's also written two books, *Super Bloom* and *The Super Bloom Handbook*, and has a third on the way.

Given her penchant for plants, and childhood spent in rambling country gardens, 400 square metres of soil was never going to be enough. But true to her nature, Jac sees the size constraint as an opportunity. "I'm really interested in creating landscapes where plants are the main event," she says. "This property, with its open spaces at the front and back, has allowed us to explore naturalistic planting on a suburban scale."

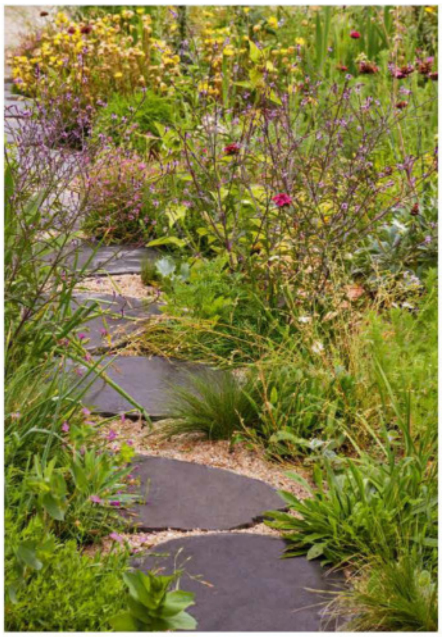
Jac began at the front, experimenting with what she describes as "a big block planting" – her interpretation of what an Australian perennial garden might look like. It's a blousy, full planting, and the only area of the garden which is fed with compost and irrigated in summer. Tall, gangly limbs of several cultivars of smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria*) and tree poppy (*Bocconia frutescens*) frame and shade the house in summer, while Australian wildflowers, bulbs and perennials create seasonal interest.

Moving through a gravel courtyard, under a pergola dripping with glory vine, and past the outdoor bath and potting shed, Jac is trialling a dry, dynamic planting. "I'm not quite sure how else to describe Australian naturalistic planting," she says. "It's naturalistic, but it's for a dry summer and it responds to where we are, using a lot of indigenous wildflowers."

It was inevitable that Jac's garden would eventually spill out on to the verge. "I wanted to test more dry, rain-fed plant mixes and didn't have the room," she explains. "It was initially about space. I feel like I'm gardening now more for the community." The verge garden has become beloved by locals and visitors from afar, and the conversations provoked by it continue to shape Jac's work. "It's busted a lot of my assumptions around what the public want," she says.

"Six years ago, I would have said that while I like a messy garden, my neighbours won't, because I don't see any examples around surrounding me. But neighbours of all backgrounds really ▷

The back, dry garden is not watered past establishment and features a mix of endemic and exotic species, such as *Podolepis jaceoides*, *Calandrinia grandiflora*, *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton', tall *Digitalis lanata* 'Café Crème' and *Dianthus deltoides* 'Brilliant'.



Bottom row from left to right

Small as her garden is, Jac has still managed to squeeze in an outdoor bath behind the potting shed dominated by broad-leaved *Farfugium japonicum*, which enjoys the sheltered location, as does the chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*).

Slate stepping stones set in a local pea gravel wind through dense planting that includes the yellow flowers of copper-wire daisy (*Podolepis jaceoides*), and the airy stems of *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton'.

The narrow path to Jac's potting shed is lined with an eclectic and colourful mix of plants including kniphofias, salvias and the rust-coloured *Achillea* 'Feuerland' while potted *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* at the door add an exotic touch.

Bottom row from left to right

Horticulturist and author Jac Semmler in the suburban garden she's named Heartland. Her first home garden, it's become a real plantsperson's paradise in just five short years.

A narrow pathway finished with local pea gravel leads through the front garden. A low hedge of *Euonymus* 'Tom Thumb' frames plantings that includes the exotic-looking plume poppy (*Macleaya cordata*).

Jac's partner Matt built the sunshine-yellow picnic table, a colour Jac loves. "It's such an iconic Australian plant colour," she says. Climbing up the nearby pergola is the grape vine (*Vitis labrusca* 'Concord') and a Japanese persimmon (*Diospyros kaki* 'Fuyu'), which provides fruit in late autumn.

Helianthus annuus 'Compact Lilac Spray', an Australian-bred sunflower cultivar, grows alongside *Cynara cardunculus* and *Cotinus* 'Grace'.

Jac uses the street plantings to test new plant combinations and care methods. Here low-growing *Nepeta* 'Prussian Blue', grows alongside Australian native *Lithotoma axillaris*, *Pelargonium* 'Graveolens', *Papaver* 'Flanders Field' and the delicate pink flowers of *Clarkia unguiculata*.

Through the garden, we can take clients and collaborators on a journey around what's possible

▷ love the garden, and often have very insightful observations about it." Many, she says, are on flower watch: "They might be the first person to see something has started flowering, or changing. They like the complexity and the flux."

The gardens, within and beyond the boundary, play an integral role in Jac's professional life. They're a living lab, in which she's constantly testing new plants, planting combinations and management techniques. In the verge gardens, for example, she's testing layered plant mixes consisting of Australian shrubs combined with grasses, drought-tolerant perennials and bulbs.

Jac applies the lessons she's learned from her own garden to those she designs for others. "The style of planting we're doing at the moment is quite unique in Australia, because it's not a replication of what naturalism is in the Northern Hemisphere," she says. "Through the garden, we can take clients and collaborators on a journey around what's possible."

For Jac, "the garden means everything". Not only is it essential to her work, it's a place of deep meaning – connecting both present and past, personal and professional. Rose pelargoniums from her grandmother's garden and bearded iris from her aunty jostle with an ever-expanding cast of plants to test, propagate and observe. It's a beautiful merging of life and work. ❑

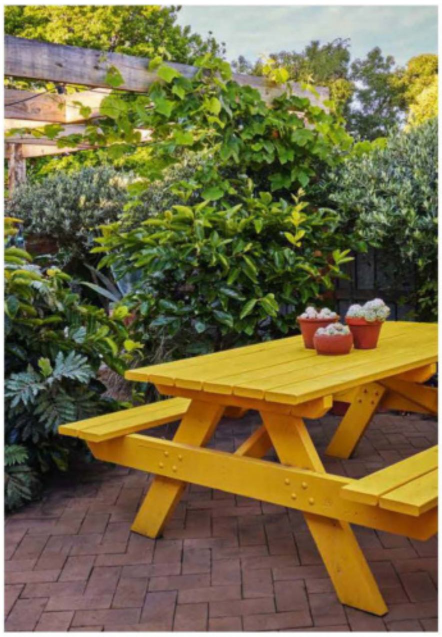
USEFUL INFORMATION
Follow Jac Semmler on Instagram
@jac.semmler

Jac's design tips for small-space gardening

Scale is key when it comes to small-scale naturalistic planting, according to Jac. She suggests using arrangements of smaller plants, allowing for "the repetition, the big sweeps and the drifts of plants in your field of vision" while also maintaining a sense of diversity and openness. "It feels expansive," she says, "not this thing pressing in on you and you can't move around."

Somewhat counterintuitively, Jac also suggests filling the space with plants and keeping hardscape to a minimum. "Too often, I see a lot of small gardens where the plants end up being edge confetti – a big table at the centre and planting only on the outskirts – while you could actually have planting right through and then just have a little seat or table within it."

Recently, Jac did a project in a tiny courtyard using naturalistic planting principles in five large pots. "Using small species, such as bulbs, herbaceous perennials or Australian wildflowers you'll have different things emerging at different points in time. You might not have a massive drift, or a massive peak of colour, but you've got little smattering fireworks throughout the year, all these little complex moments."



Showcasing 22 of the world's 41 species of dahlia and more than 1,700 cultivars, the half-acre field is filled with colour from mid-July until November.

Starting over

The National Dahlia Collection has had several homes since its inception in the 1980s, and now, under the care of a dedicated dahlia aficionado, it has been rescued and relocated once more to a new site in Cornwall

WORDS **AMBRA EDWARDS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

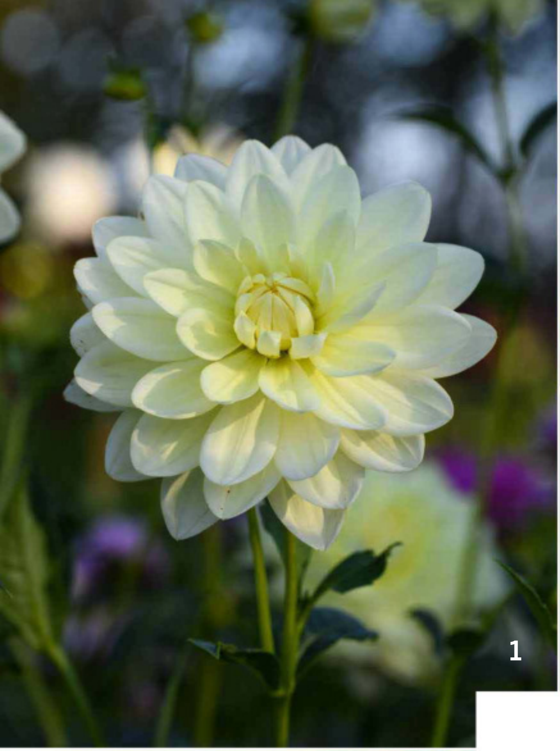
Over the Easter weekend in 2021, a steady stream of cars, vans, trucks and trailers wound back and forth through narrow Cornish lanes to an empty field near Camborne. Each was piled high with black plastic crates, and within every one of these 5,500 crates, nested in loose, dry compost, lay tubers – sometimes as many as eight, sometimes just an irreplaceable singleton. The precious mother stock of the National Dahlia Collection, it was rescued by a devoted band of volunteers led by a local horticultural lecturer Louise Danks.

The collection's new home is a half-acre triangle of grassy field belonging to the Kehelland Trust – a charity offering horticultural therapy and training to adults with learning or physical disabilities. Previously used to grow brassicas, the site is conveniently sheltered by high hedges, and, crucially, the soil is light, sandy and free draining – ideal for dahlias, which hate to get their feet wet.

It had been touch and go. First established in Oxfordshire in the 1980s, the collection had moved with its founder, David Brown, to Duchy College Rosewarne in Cornwall, then moved once more to Varfell Farm, near Penzance, in 1998. Here it remained for over two resplendent decades – growing in size and scope to showcase 22 of the world's 41 species and more than 1,700 cultivars. But by 2020, the commercial dahlia business that supported the collection was no longer viable, and the decision was made to close the site.

Louise was appalled. She had worked at Rosewarne as a student, deadheading dahlias, and joined the Varfell team as an adult, overseeing the production of some 40,000 rooted dahlia cuttings a year. She had won Gold medals for her dahlia exhibits at Chelsea and, most importantly for her, had learned dahlia cultivation from the two finest growers in the business – Varfell's Mike Mann and hybridiser extraordinaire Mark Twyning (creator of the sumptuous *Dahlia* 'Twyning's After Eight', with leaves the colour of chocolate and large single flowers with the unnatural pallor of mint cream).

Although by this time she was no longer at Varfell, she felt the collection was an important part of her history, and Cornwall's horticultural heritage. "There was this niggling voice in my head, saying 'Someone should do something about it'. ▷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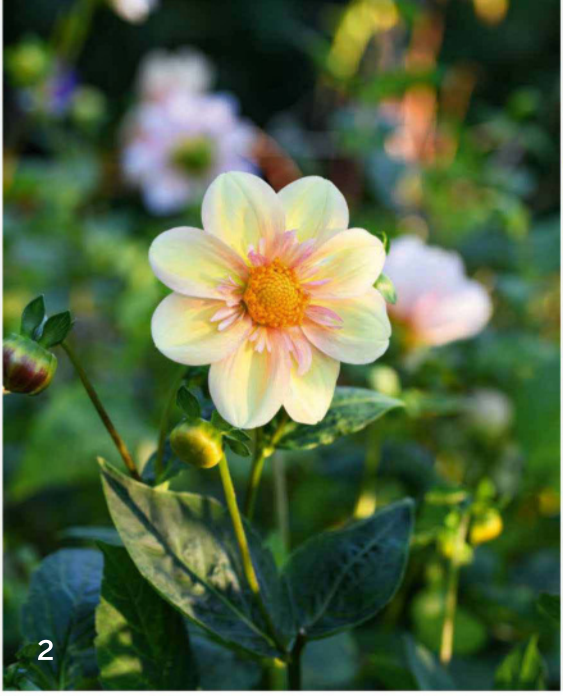
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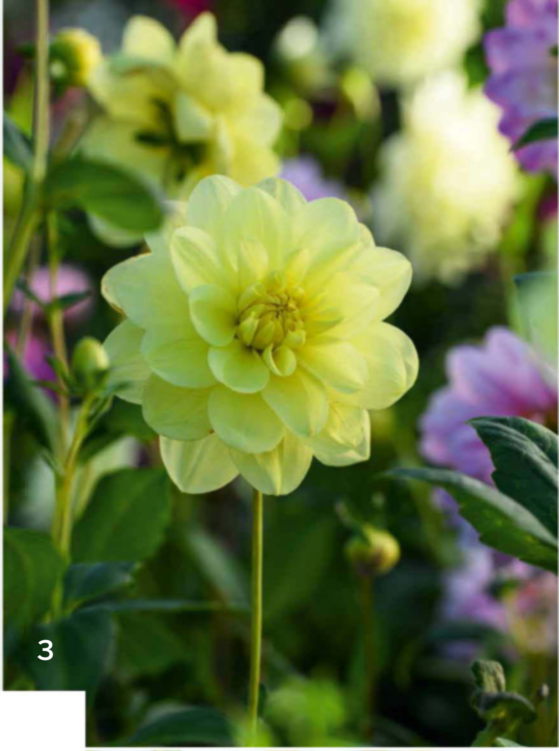
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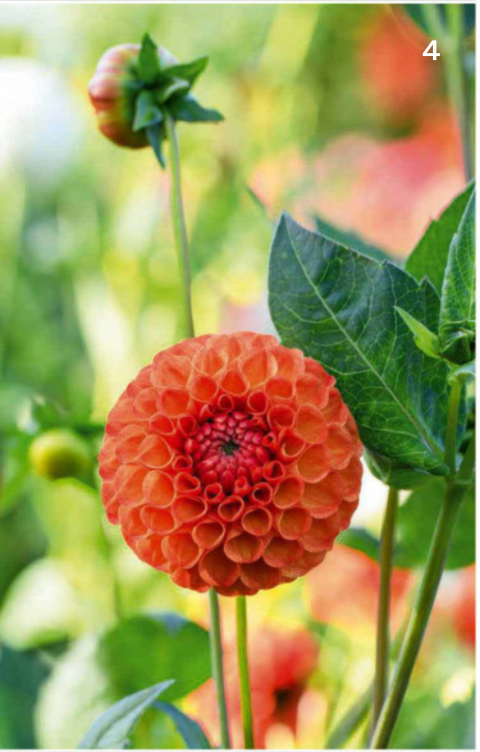
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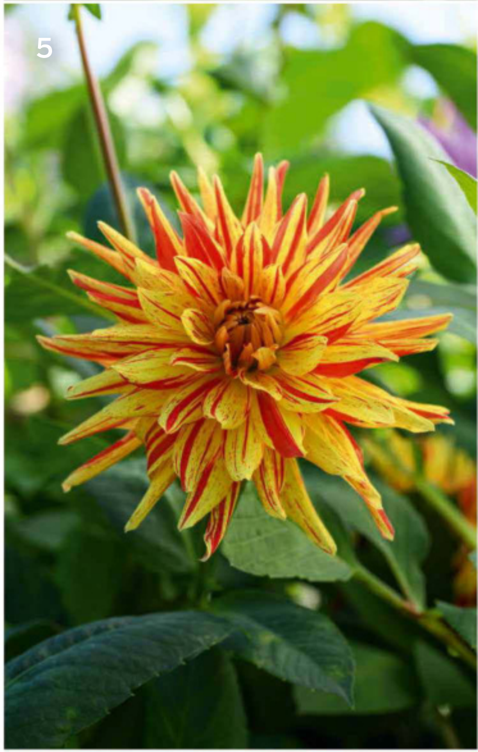
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Louise's top 17 dahlias

1 *Dahlia* 'Cameo' This strong, upright waterlily dahlia from Australia bears perfectly arranged creamy-yellow petals with a hint of lemon at the centre. Elegant flowers 7-10cm across will last a full week in a vase. Height and spread: 1.75m x 1.2m.

2 *Dahlia* 'Apple Blossom' A collarette dahlia – a category introduced in the early 1900s. The inner 'collar' lying on a flat single flower makes it an excellent choice for encouraging pollinators. Very popular with florists and flower farmers alike due to its subtle tones. 1.2m x 1m.

3 *Dahlia* 'Glorie van Heemstede' Offers waterlily blooms of a refined lemon yellow, up to 15cm across. A strong dahlia with good foliage, impressive in both the garden and the vase. 1.3m x 70cm. AGM*.

4 *Dahlia* 'New Baby' A reliable plant, offering many flowers of vibrant orange and 5cm across over a long period. Graceful enough for dainty arrangements, zingy enough to lift a hot border or bob through a grass garden. 90cm x 75cm.

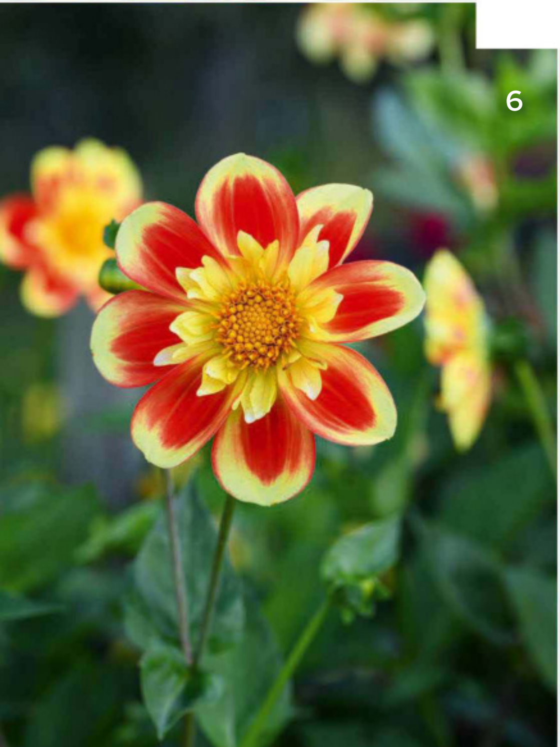
5 *Dahlia* 'Striped Vulcan' A large cactus dahlia with tousled blooms, wildly striped and spotted, up to 20cm in diameter. A cultivar that is always a favourite with the children who visit – simply fun. 1.2m x 1m.

6 *Dahlia* 'Pooh – Swan Island' A dahlia that makes everyone smile. A deservedly popular and reliable collarette, neat in form, with prolific red and yellow blooms (75cm across), loved as much by pollinators as people. 1m x 50cm. AGM.

7 *Dahlia* 'Weston Pirate' A miniature cactus dahlia with blooms of no more than 10cm across, in a clear singing red. 1.2m x 1m. AGM.

8 *Dahlia* 'Hazel Bear' An orchid-flowered dahlia Louise named for her youngest daughter. Pink, yellow and white blends on quill-shaped petals. As Louise says, it is "absolutely beautiful, just like Hazel". 1m x 1m.

Top dahlias continued on page 62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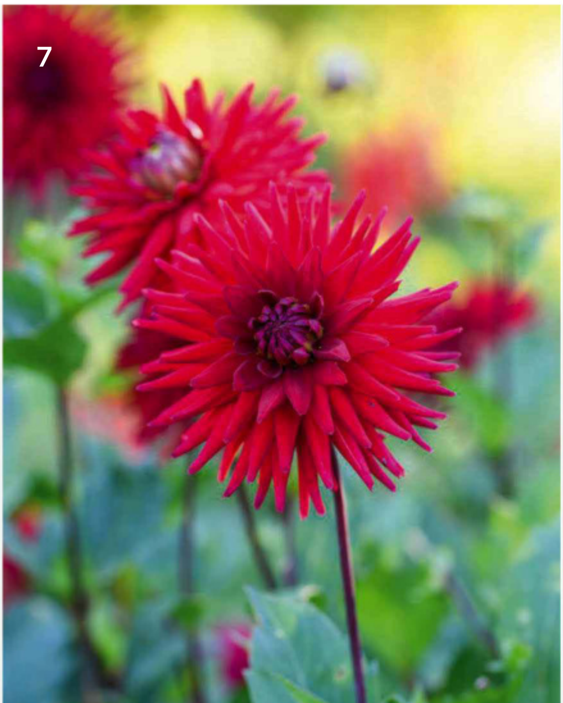
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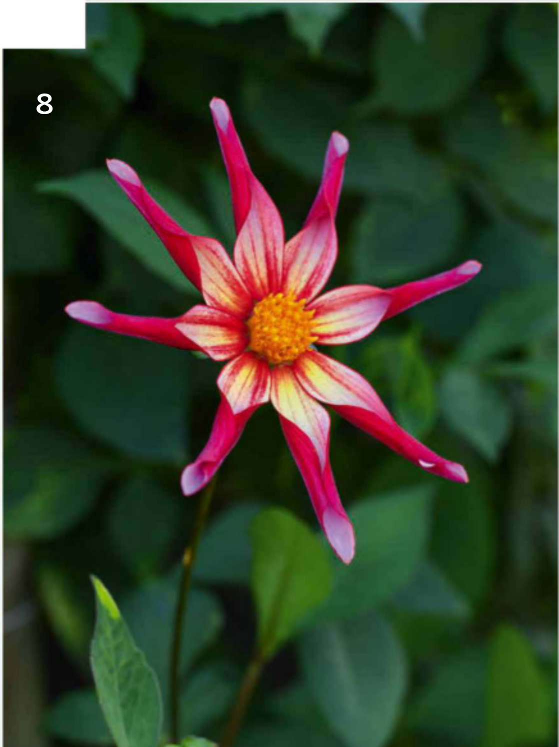
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▷ It's such a valuable collection botanically, it would be terrible if it were lost. And eventually it became clear that the someone had to be me. The trouble was, I didn't have any land."

By now, Louise was teaching at Duchy College Rosewarne. If, she tentatively asked, she could secure the mother stock, would the college allow her to store 5,000-plus crates in an empty polytunnel over the winter? A little to her surprise, they agreed. Working with her father, Chris Danks, along with the help of family and friends, the dahlias were moved to Rosewarne. "They were stacked up in towers of crates, higher than me. But obviously, this was only a stop-gap solution: a permanent home had to be found before the tubers started growing. Luckily, it was a really late spring – I think I was the only grower in the UK who was happy about that."

The polytunnel had to be emptied by Easter. Happily, Kehelland's offer came just in the nick of time. Strip beds were hastily dug in the field, an electric fence erected to discourage the many rabbits, and the hard work of preparing the soil and planting the tubers began. The collection was arranged, as before, in classification order, organised by flower form, size and colour. (The American Dahlia Society specifies 19 flower forms, while the National Dahlia Society of the UK recognises a paltry 15.) But on a site a quarter of the size of the previous one, the plants were squeezed in much closer together. "It has its advantages," says Louise. "The plants prop each other up and it makes being among them a truly immersive experience."

From July to November, there is no more beautiful place to be. Sizzling with colour and loud with birdsong, the dahlia field offers a sanctuary of delight for both Kehelland's clients and the loyal volunteers who keep the collection going. All have day jobs, not least Louise (who is learning and content manager for the RHS) and her father, a landscape gardener, who are the backbone of the team – hard at work on the collection every Saturday and Wednesday evening. "Deadheading on a sunny evening is a lovely task," says Louise, "and with a lot of help we keep on top of it. It's more difficult to get volunteers to barrow 45 tonnes of mulch in the winter."

Most summers, the collection is open to visitors – although this summer it will be closed while Louise and Chris tackle the mammoth task of lifting and dividing all the tubers. "But we'll be back next year," she promises, "bigger and better than ever."

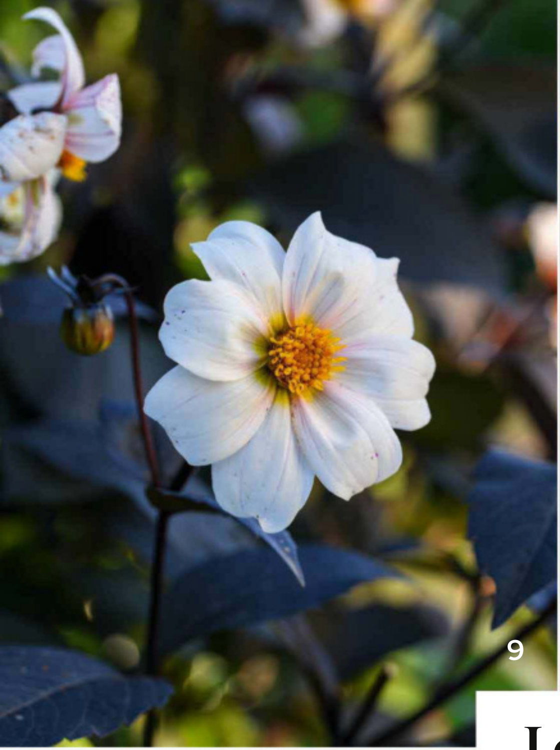
It was never her ambition to grow only dahlias, she says. "I certainly didn't ever set out to have the National Collection. But I grew to love them. They are genuinely interesting plants, and there's something for everyone – whether a giant decorative that looks like something from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* or beautiful *Dahlia merckii* that wouldn't look out of place in a Jekyll border. There are some very sophisticated dahlias; there are also those that are totally hysterical and ridiculous. There aren't many other genera of plants you can say that about." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Kehelland Trust, Kehelland, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 0DD. **Web** kehellandtrust.org.uk
The National Dahlia Collection will open again next year from July to October. For more information, visit **plantheritage.org.uk**

Find more advice on growing dahlias at **gardensillustrated.com/dahlia-care**

National Dahlia Collection holder Louise Danks deadheading *Dahlia* 'Newquay' at the Collection's new Cornish home.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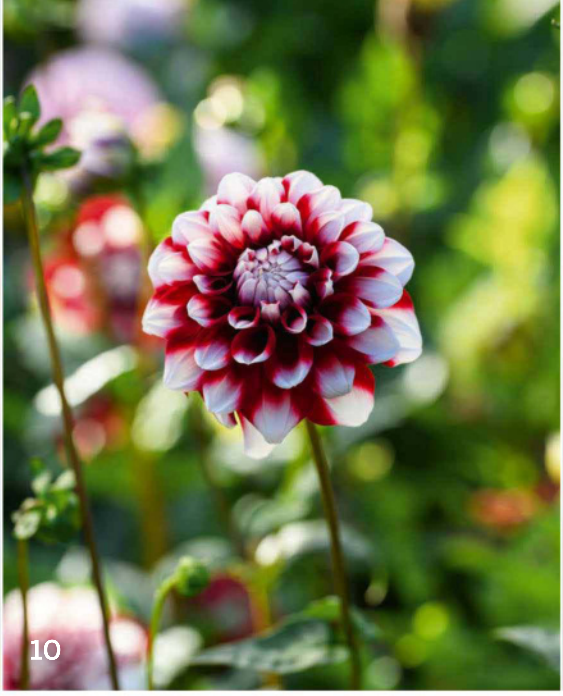
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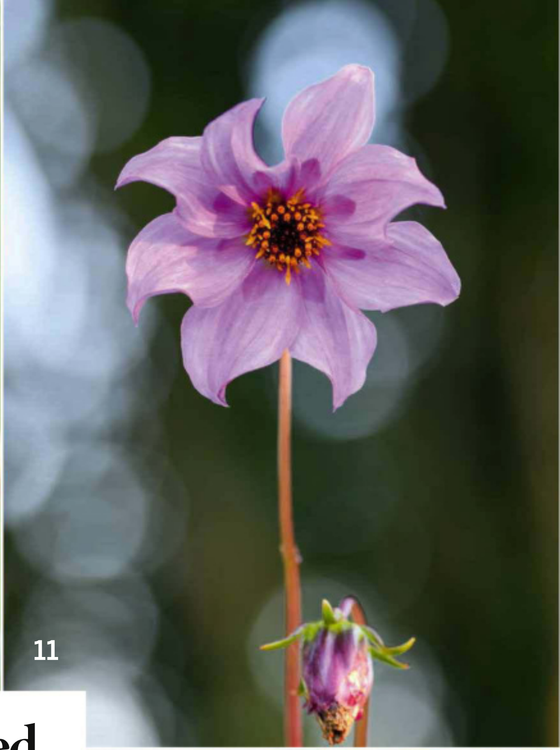
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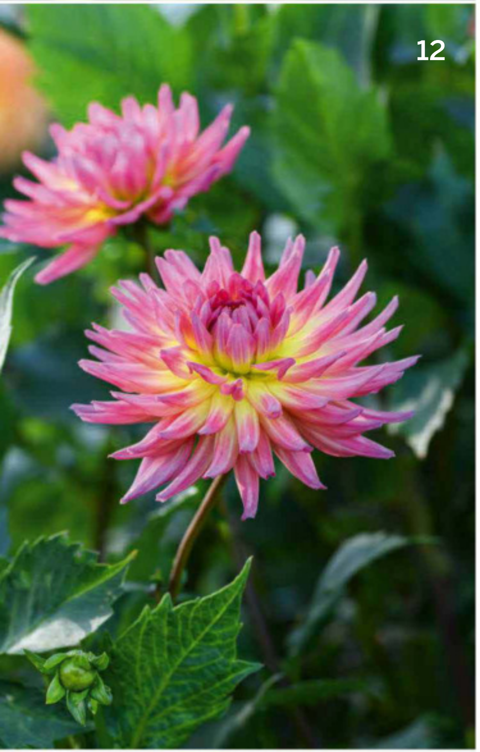
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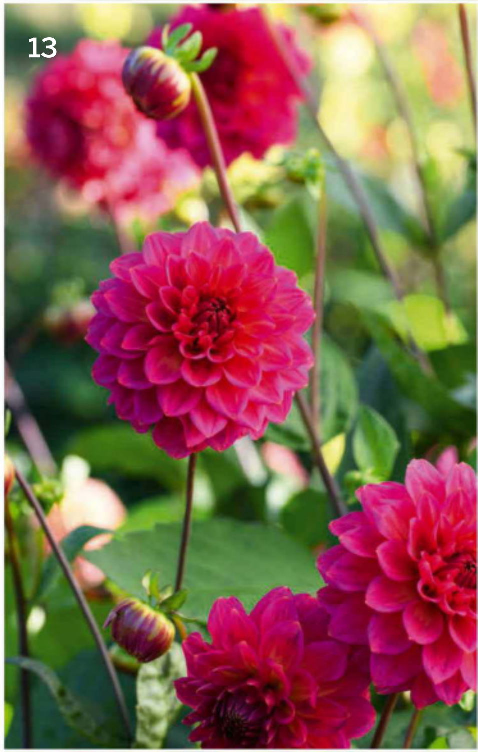
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Lousie's top dahlias continued

9 ***Dahlia*** **'Twyning's After Eight'** A striking dahlia with chocolate-coloured foliage and creamy-white single flowers. 1.2m x 60cm. AGM.

10 ***Dahlia*** **'Karma Yin Yang'** Bred for the cut-flower market, this is exceptional in a vase, with long, strong stems supporting glamorous blooms 12cm across. With petals of iridescent red tipped in white, this dahlia is a showstopper. 1.2m x 1.2m.

11 ***Dahlia merckii*** The best species dahlia for the average garden, it is reliably hardy, producing a mound of finely cut leaves, liberally adorned with dainty, pinky-mauve single flowers approximately 5cm in diameter. 2m x 1m.

12 ***Dahlia*** **'Karma Sangria'** A cactus type with striking quilled flowers reaching 15cm across, borne on strong stems. Barbie-pink merges boldly into golden yellow. Also an excellent foil for grasses in the garden. 1m x 60cm.

13 ***Dahlia*** **'Limozine Dean'** Beyond floriferous with cerise petals and a yellow centre, which makes it glow from the other side of the field. 1.75m x 1.25m.

14 ***Dahlia*** **Happy Single Wink (= 'HS Wink')** Glowing pink petals stained plum at the base. It's one of the Happy Singles series of small dahlias with pollinator-friendly single flowers set off by dark purple-bronze foliage. 60cm x 40cm.

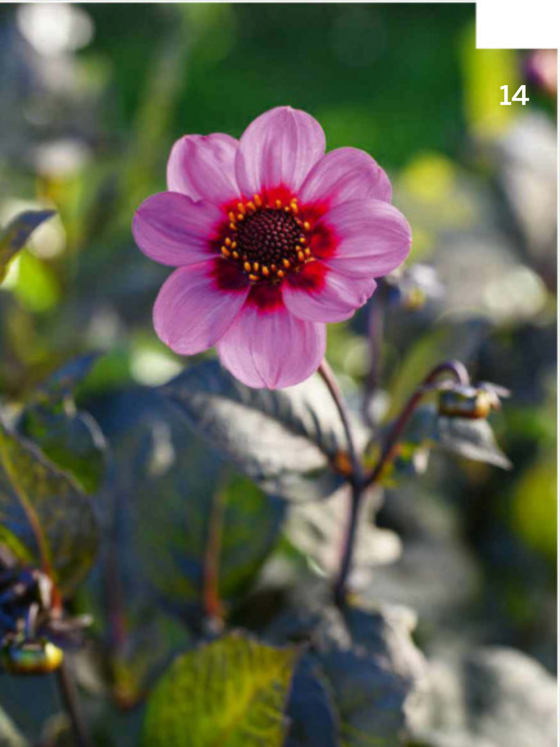
15 ***Dahlia*** **'Franz Kafka'** A floriferous pompom with perfectly round balls of bright lilac-pink, 5cm in diameter. 1m x 50cm.

16 ***Dahlia*** **'Violet Lou Lou'** A big shaggy bi-coloured decorative dahlia with *D*. 'Café au Lait' in its parentage. It's one Louise has named for her eldest daughter. As she says: "They are both complete stunners." 1.3m x 1m.

See facing page for number 17.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Most dahlias have a hardiness rating of RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.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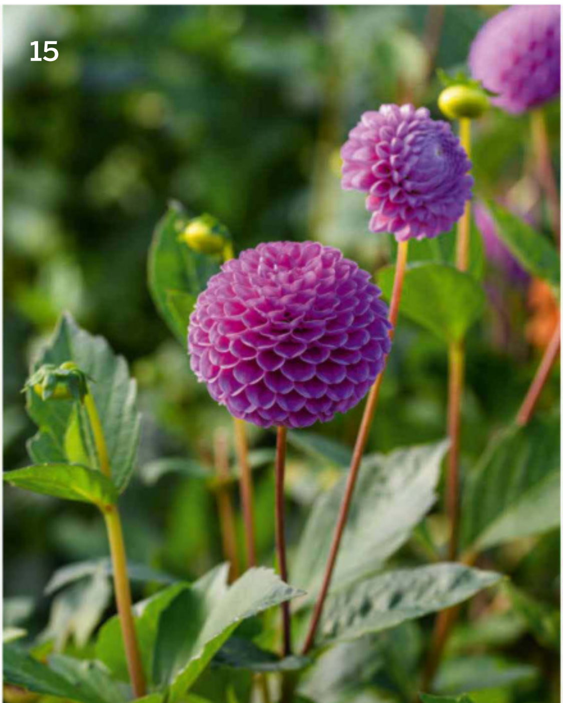
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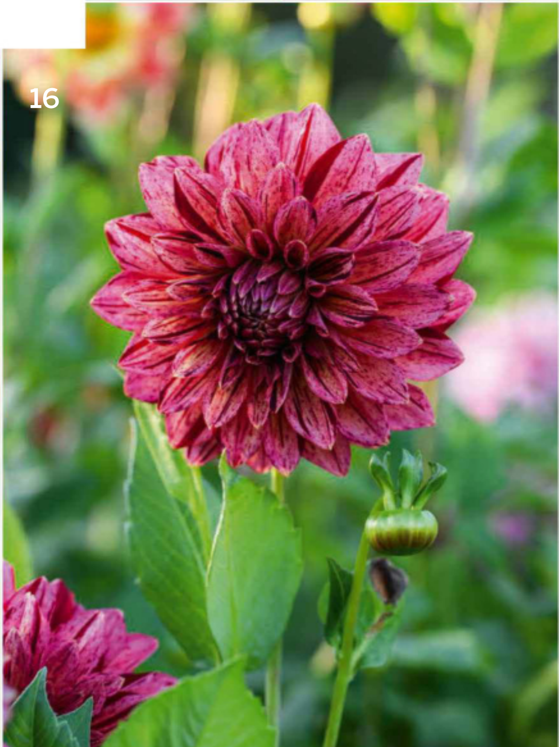
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Louise’s tips for growing dahlias

- **Feed your dahlias.** They are hungry, thirsty plants. Mulching provides some nutrients, but add a higher nitrogen feed while the plants are in leafy growth, and after pinching out the tip of the main shoot (to encourage bushier growth). Once the plants are in bud and flower, move on to something higher in potassium. Plants will benefit from regular watering, which is vital for dahlias in pots.

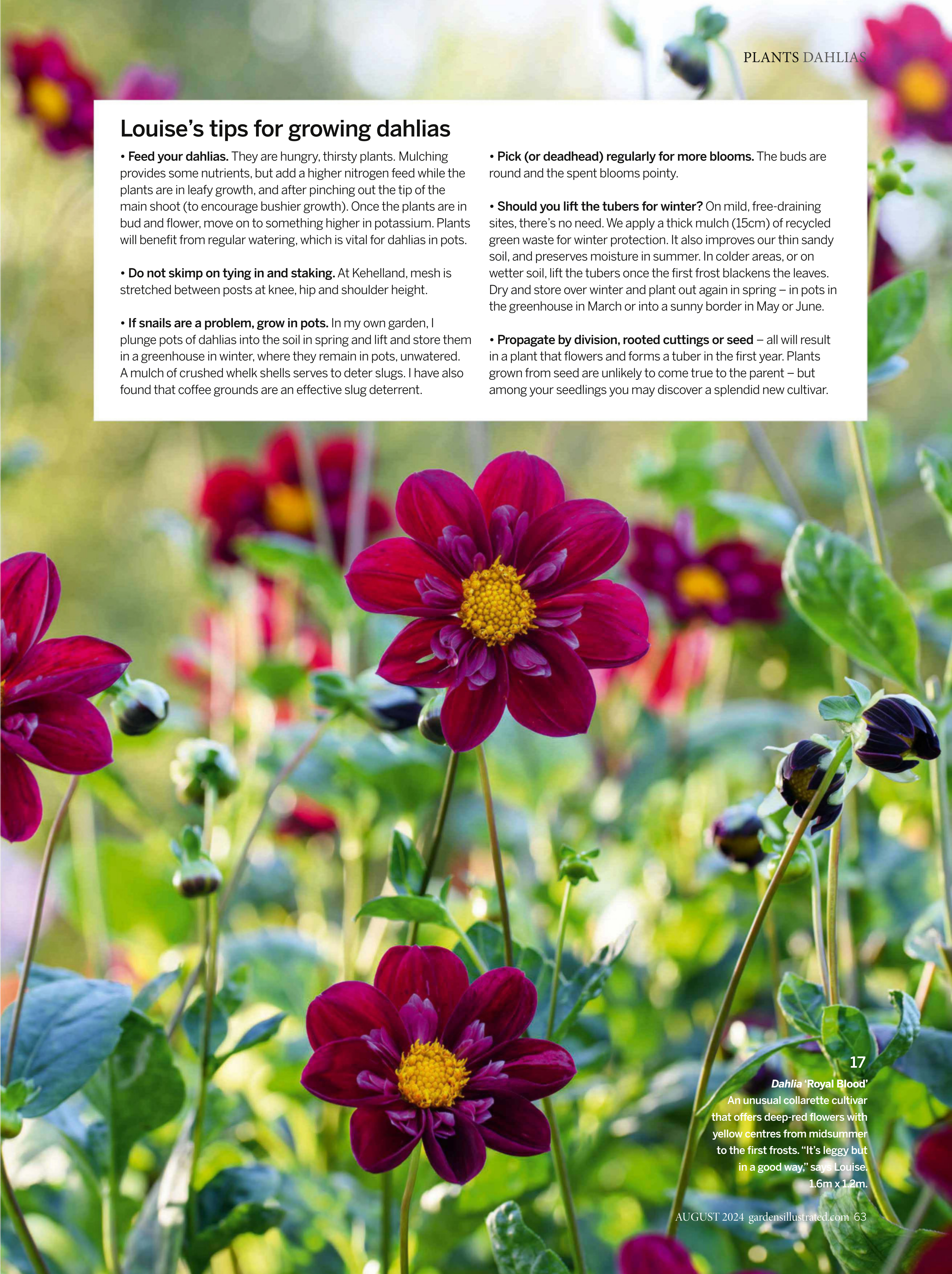
- **Do not skimp on tying in and staking.** At Kehelland, mesh is stretched between posts at knee, hip and shoulder height.

- **If snails are a problem, grow in pots.** In my own garden, I plunge pots of dahlias into the soil in spring and lift and store them in a greenhouse in winter, where they remain in pots, unwatered. A mulch of crushed whelk shells serves to deter slugs. I have also found that coffee grounds are an effective slug deterrent.

- **Pick (or deadhead) regularly for more blooms.** The buds are round and the spent blooms pointy.

- **Should you lift the tubers for winter?** On mild, free-draining sites, there’s no need. We apply a thick mulch (15cm) of recycled green waste for winter protection. It also improves our thin sandy soil, and preserves moisture in summer. In colder areas, or on wetter soil, lift the tubers once the first frost blackens the leaves. Dry and store over winter and plant out again in spring – in pots in the greenhouse in March or into a sunny border in May or June.

- **Propagate by division, rooted cuttings or seed** – all will result in a plant that flowers and forms a tuber in the first year. Plants grown from seed are unlikely to come true to the parent – but among your seedlings you may discover a splendid new cultivar.



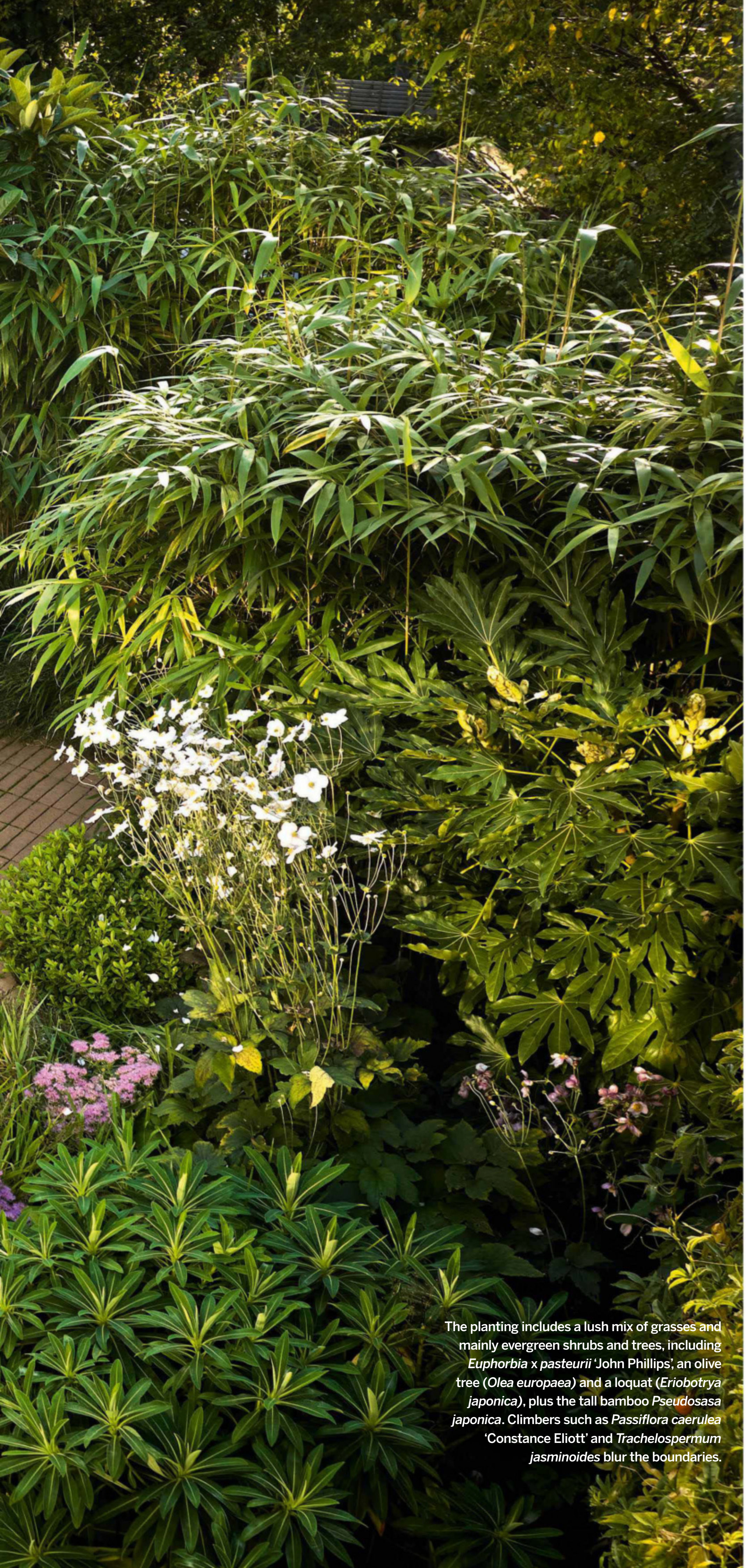
17

***Dahlia* ‘Royal Blood’**
An unusual collarette cultivar that offers deep-red flowers with yellow centres from midsummer to the first frosts. “It’s leggy but in a good way,” says Louise. 1.6m x 1.2m.

Off the grid

Design studio Viriditas has created a seemingly simple but elegantly layered, lush and immersive garden, which offers great views from the house and space for entertaining

WORDS **KATE JACOBS** PHOTOGRAPHS **ALISTER THORPE**



The planting includes a lush mix of grasses and mainly evergreen shrubs and trees, including *Euphorbia* x *pasteurii* 'John Phillips', an olive tree (*Olea europaea)* and a loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*), plus the tall bamboo *Pseudosasa japonica*. Climbers such as *Passiflora caerulea* 'Constance Eliott' and *Trachelospermum jasminoides* blur the boundaries.

IN BRIEF

What Small residential city garden with barbecue and dining areas, lush evergreen planting and Westminster clay pavers.
Where London.
Size 6m x 9m.
Soil London clay, improved with topsoil.
Aspect East-facing.
Designed by Caroline and Peter Clayton (viriditasstudio.co).

When it comes to compact urban gardens, all too often the whole space can be taken in at a glance, without even having to step outside, so it's essential that the whole garden looks good throughout the seasons. More than that, however, any garden designer worth their salt will also want to create a little mystique.

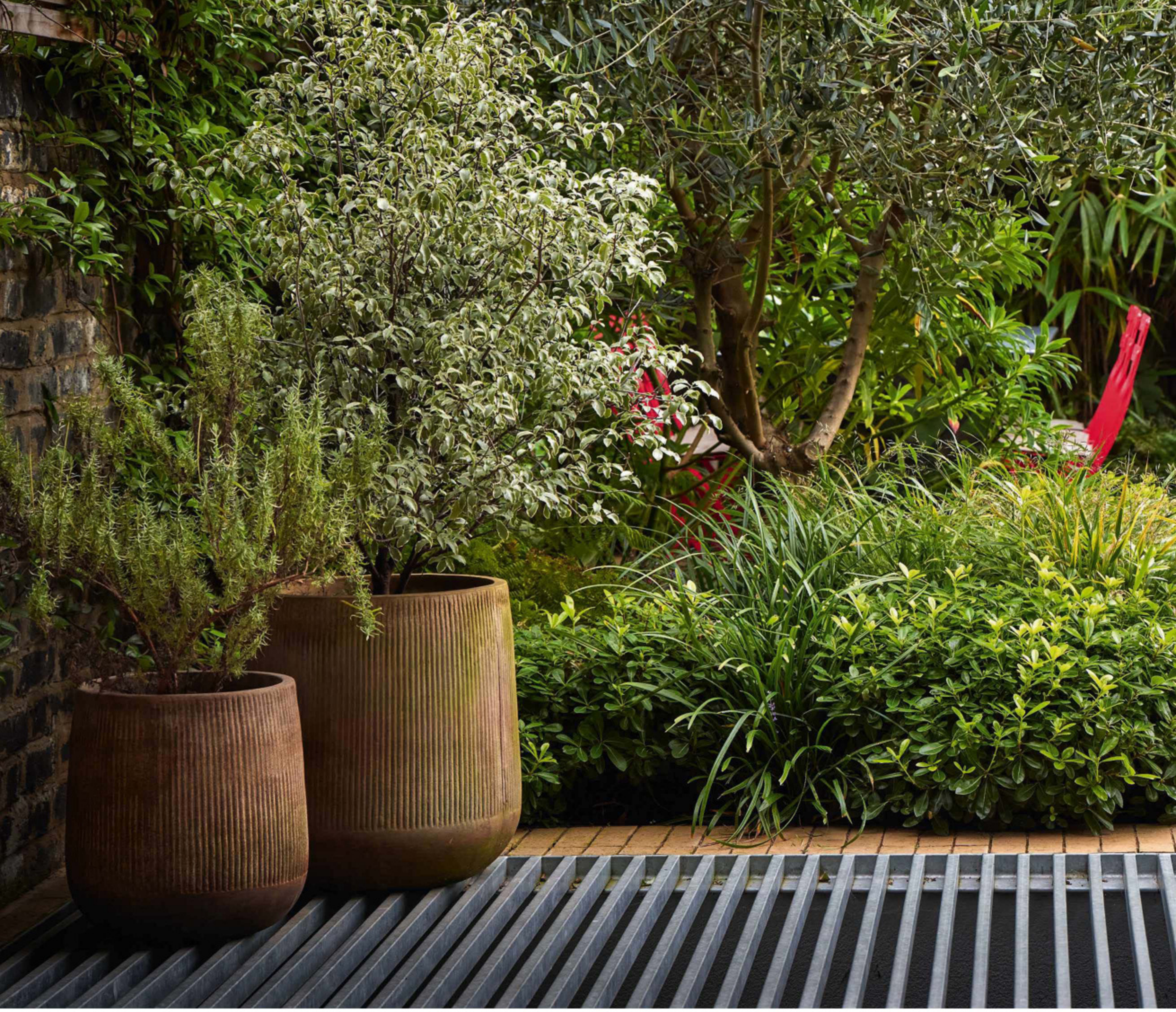
For this pocket-sized garden in west London, Caroline and Peter Clayton, the sister and brother behind garden design studio Viriditas, wanted to create a laid-back, contemporary design that looked beautiful from inside but also made people curious to step outside.

Their client – a young professional who had just finished renovating and extending her Victorian terraced house – asked for a garden where she could cook and eat with friends and family, "with lots of green and not too many flowers," recalls Caroline.

The garden had been used as a builder's store during the renovations, and was just a dusty rectangle, so Caroline and Peter had to add topsoil to replenish it. But they were happy to have a blank canvas to work with.

Keen to deliver on the owner's request for greenery, the pair set out to create a sense of a "lush jungle". They brought the planting as close to the house as they could, and set the dining area at the back of the garden, on the shadier side and hidden from view, enveloped in generous planting. A bespoke outdoor kitchen with a Weber Summit barbecue – high on the client's wish list – sits closer to the house.

"It can be difficult to create a sense of journey in a small space, but the planting just outside the house provides a lush green view and, because you can't see everything at once, the space feels bigger," explains Caroline. She has an interesting approach ▷



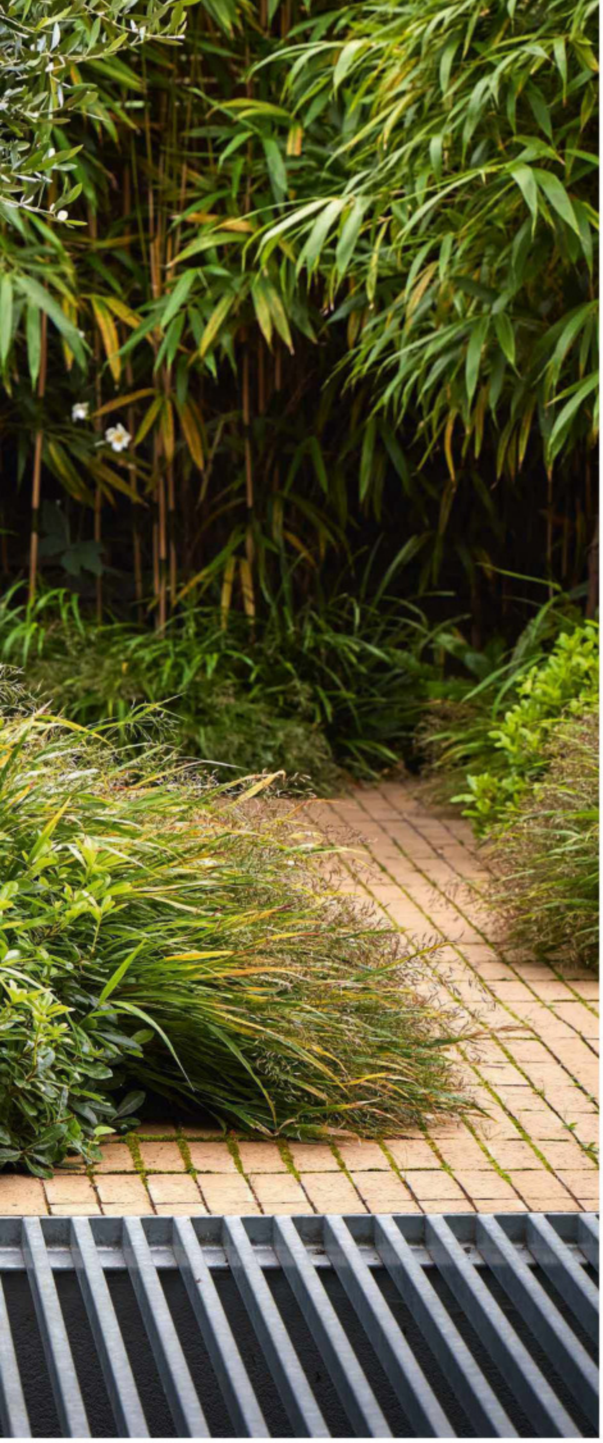
Above Two textural terracotta planters by Nkuku lift the eye from the metal grate covering a lightwell below. One is filled with rosemary and the other features *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Queen' with its pale, variegated leaves.

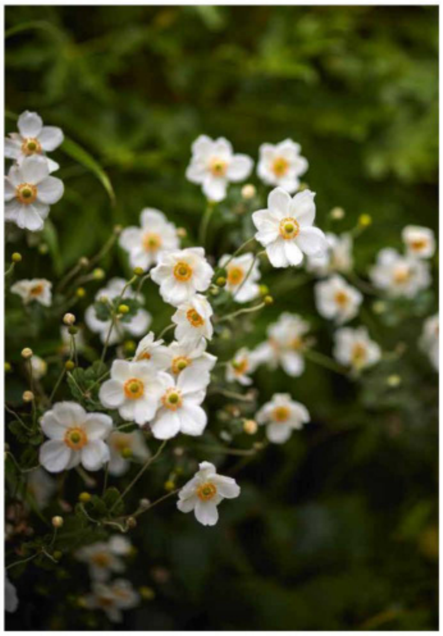
Right The garden features a few carefully chosen flowers, including the sedum *Hylotelephium spectabile* 'Crystal Pink', which provides nectar into the autumn.

Facing page, top In a sheltered urban setting, *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' offers pure-white flowers with contrasting yellow stamens, from late summer well into autumn.

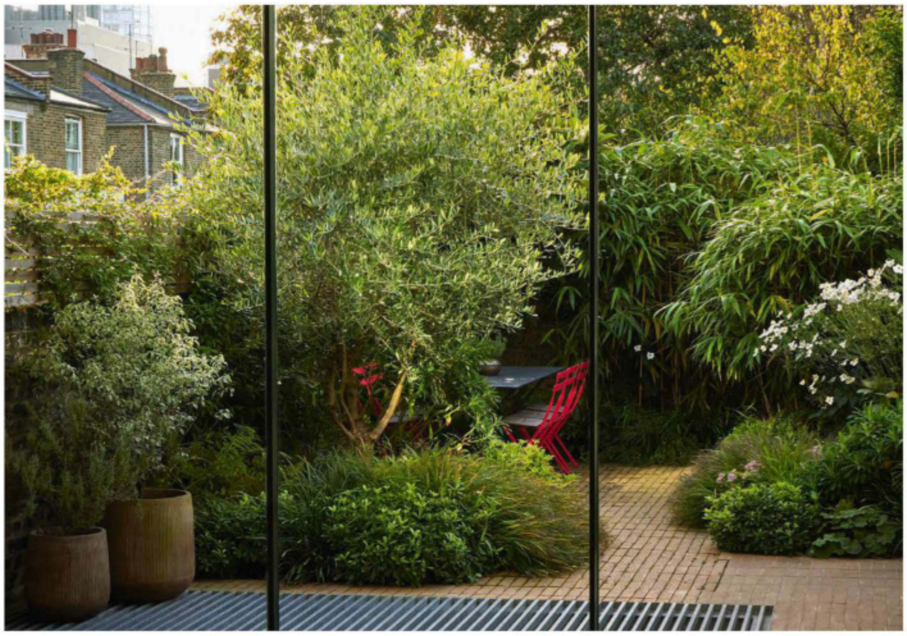
Facing page, middle Viriditas has brought the structural evergreen planting as close to the house as possible, and carefully positioned an olive tree to provide a focal point and screen the dining area.

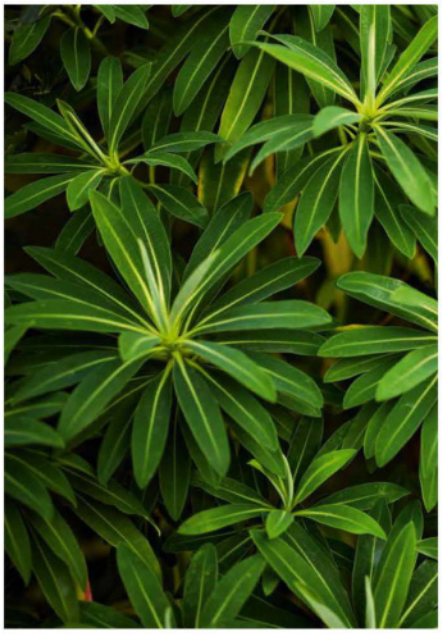
Facing page, bottom This architectural evergreen shrub, *Euphorbia* x *pasteurii* 'John Phillips', offers winter structure with striking foliage, and honey-scented flowers in early summer.





Planting just outside the house provides a lush green view and, because you can't see everything at once, the space feels bigger



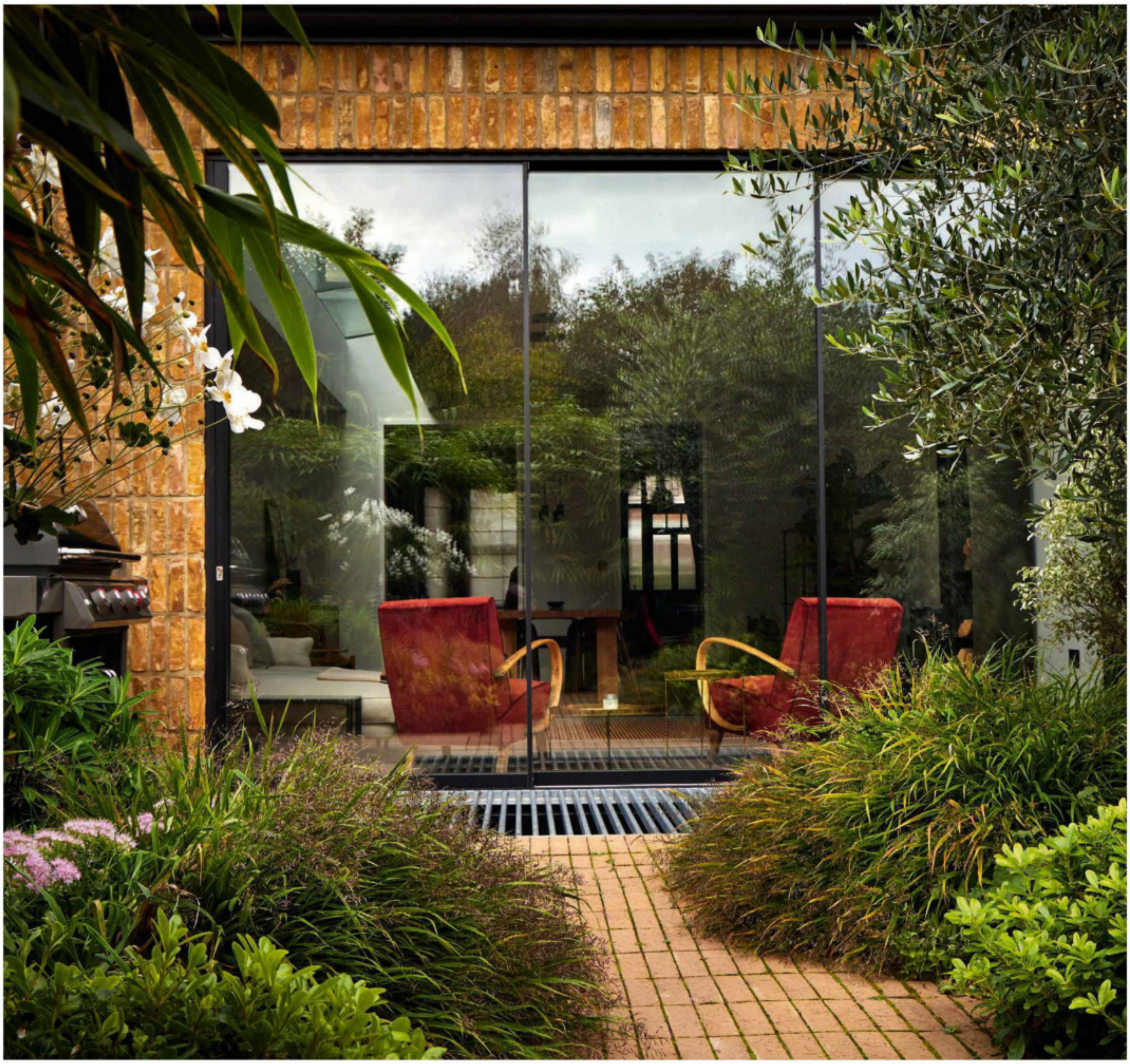


▷ to planning the layout of small gardens. She likes to begin with the furniture, carefully measuring it and allowing for comfortable amounts of space to move freely around it. Then everything else gets designated for planting, which creates an immersive atmosphere.

Here, the material palette has been kept ultra-simple, with mellow-toned Westminster clay pavers that echo the reclaimed London stock bricks used on the house extension, while introducing a more contemporary element. "The muted, creamy colour is quite calming, whereas terracotta shades would be more energising," says Caroline. The pavers are laid in a linear, stacked bond arrangement, which Caroline explains gives a grid-like, mid-century style look. "Part of our studio ethos is to take traditional artisan materials and use them in a modern way," she says.

The clean-lined paving and rectilinear plan of the garden contrast well with the soft, shaggy planting, with tactile grass *Hakonechloa macra* and mounds of glossy-leaved shrub *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' spill over the paved areas, "blurring the boundaries between hard and soft".

In order to achieve year-round interest, there is an emphasis on evergreens in the planting palette. "To avoid it looking very bleak in winter, it was important to the owner to have evergreens, but we steered clear of heavier things like conifers and *Taxus*." Green foliage was prioritised over flowers but, says Caroline, "the flowers we did include were chosen to hold their own and not be swallowed up by the evergreens". Among these are white periwinkle *Vinca minor* f. *alba* 'Gertrude Jekyll', lime-yellow lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), purple spires of *Salvia* 'Amistad' and elegant white ▷



Above Mounds of Japanese forest grass *Hakonechloa macra* and the compact evergreen shrub *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' spill out over the path laid with Westminster clay pavers from London Stone.

Facing page The dining area, with a Caractère table and bright-red Bistro chairs from Fermob, also features a loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*), a large evergreen shrub or small tree. It provides privacy all year round and helps to blur the boundary.

▷ *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'. "We always try to use foliage shapes that echo each other and then punctuate the similarities with a contrast. I love the way that the pale, variegated leaves of the potted *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Queen' echo the silver of the olive tree behind it, adding a rhythm to the planting, while the *Euphorbia mellifera* in the right-hand bed echoes the bamboo beyond," says Caroline.

The olive tree (*Olea europaea*), which is drought-tolerant, screens the dining area, along with vivid *Salvia* 'Amistad'. "It was a delight planting this project up, and the bees started feasting on the new plants before they were even in the ground." Behind the dining table, a loquat tree (*Eriobotrya japonica*) was chosen for its large, leathery leaves and tiny, white flowers that are popular with pollinators. "It looks great all year round and adds a slightly tropical feel to the garden. In central London, with its warmer climate, we're finding that some of these trees are actually starting to fruit."

The bamboo – a *Pseudosasa japonica* reined in by a root barrier – lines the back bed, creating some privacy and hiding an unsightly air-source heat pump. They designed a bespoke trellis with wide gaps between the vertical cedar batons to allow light in and for climbing plants to grow up. Passion flower *Passiflora caerulea* 'Constance Eliott', with its striking blooms, and star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides)* envelop the boundaries – a useful trick for making a small garden seem larger.

The garden now provides the owner with a green space to unwind in, and a place to cook for friends and family. "She loves relaxing in the space. We think of gardens as an extension of the home, so it's important that they are places that you want to live in." ❑

The loquat tree, with its large, leathery leaves, looks great all year and adds a slightly tropical feel to the garden

Last taste of summer

As the seasons begin to change, **Beth Al Rikabi** suggests four easy recipes for preserving foraged fruits and overlooked vegetables

PHOTOGRAPHS MATT INWOOD

Forager-chef Beth Al Rikabi makes the most of the bounty from her own and friends' gardens, as well as the hedgerows around her Wiltshire home – such as these medlars – to use in jams, jellies and pickles.

I filled my time with foraging, perusing hedgerows and finding ways to preserve the produce from this wonderful world around me

I get overly excited about seasonal gluts: an armful of rhubarb gifted by a neighbour or a sticky Tupperware box filled with raspberries still full of disgruntled bugs. This bounty prompts exchanges and sharing, storytelling and creativity; all beautiful ways to connect with each other and the world around us.

I've felt compelled to eat seasonally and sustainably for a long time, but more so since working with Fareshare South West, a charity striving to reduce food waste at the same time as redirecting this surplus towards the people who need it most. After completing a creative writing degree and unwittingly falling into cooking, I worked in restaurant kitchens, baked quirky cakes and managed cafés before my time with Fareshare.

With a warehouse full of potential ingredients that would have otherwise gone to landfill, we catered festivals and events, building kitchens, cooking for hundreds and being extremely creative with what we had. Working in this way alongside others more experienced in winging it, I became accustomed to thinking on my feet. Having to cook with surplus ingredients made me realise that you can create something from almost nothing if you think about it in the right way. This ethos became the basis for how I approach life and work, whether it be an unfamiliar kitchen or the general flotsam and jetsam of the day to day.

It was through a connection made during time with Fareshare that a chance to chef at a retreat centre outside Rome came my way and I apprehensively said yes. This opportunity made me feel uncomfortable, but fortunately I recognised the buzzing urgency between the fear and excitement and was driven towards it. After some initial wobbles and homesickness, I relaxed into this beguiling way of creating food and nourishing people.

The Free Range Chef came in to being around this time, with retreat work taking me to Morocco, Ibiza and Belgium as well as the UK. After having a baby girl in 2017, travel was not so easy, compounded by Covid a few years later. Confined to my garden with a toddler, and all my work cancelled for the foreseeable, I filled my time with foraging, perusing hedgerows and finding ways to preserve the produce from this wonderful world around me. I learned so much when I allowed myself the time to look with the same sense of wonder as my little Esme, tuning in to the seasonal ebbs and flows, and accepting the cyclical nature of life.

When we couldn't get to the shops, we would gather edible green leaves from the garden and blitz with nuts or seeds to stir through our pasta. We made do and found that we were happier for it. I still feel this sense of calm and contentment when using what I have to hand. The modest jar of jam you make from a sad-looking apple, a cinnamon stick and a handful of autumn raspberries tastes like nothing else. Dicing up a broccoli nubbin and frying in butter to stir through a dish brings me an unquantifiable sense of wellbeing.

It is something I strive to feel in all areas of life and encourage others to discover. When I cook for friends, family and guests on retreat, I want to inspire them to look at things differently and think outside of what is deemed normal. There will always be iffy experiments that sit at the back of your fridge for a bit too long, but among them there will be happy accidents, stories to tell and recipes to share.

Turn the page for four delicious recipes ▷

Elder, blackberry and apple jam

Makes 2 regular sized jars, 350g each

INGREDIENTS

- 500g combined weight of blackberries and elderberries
- 2 apples, regular or cookers, peeled and diced
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 75ml water
- 500g granulated sugar

Blackberries are the easiest of things to identify. Granny would say you couldn't eat them after September as the devil had spat on them, a saying that I discovered is rooted in a bible story involving Lucifer landing in hell directly on top of a blackberry bush. Even if the devil hasn't spat on your blackberries, by September's end they are usually quite manky so best harvest them early. Elderberries are a little harder to identify with other plants fashioning similar berries, so make sure you are certain before cooking with them. Many recipes call for cooking apples, which will collapse in the heat of the pan resulting in a smoother jam. I rather like using eating apples though as they keep their shape, resulting in little tart nubbins within the jam.

Filling the house with fruity steam and BBC Radio 4 is one of my most favourite ways to celebrate the season. It's cheap and easy, and I encourage everyone to join in.

METHOD

- Give your berries a good clean. I tend to pop them in a bowl, cover with cold water and leave for a bit, allowing the bedraggled insects to shuffle off before becoming part of your sweet preserve. Sterilise the jars and lids well with boiling water.
- Put the berries, apples, lemon juice, cinnamon stick and water in a pan. Bring up to heat and simmer for around 15 minutes.
- Add the sugar and stir on low for a few minutes to allow it to dissolve.
- Take out the cinnamon stick, turn up the heat a little and allow to boil for around 15 minutes, gently stirring every now and then.
- If you have a jam thermometer, it will tell you when it is ready. If not then put a plate in the freezer before starting your jam journey and after 15 minutes of boiling, put a dollop of the mix on the plate, leave for a moment then push with your finger to see if it wrinkles. If so, it is done. If not then it needs more boiling. I've jarred up my fair share of jams and marmalades before they are truly ready. It's really worth getting this bit right to avoid disappointment at breakfast time with buttery toast prepared but flaccid jam in your jar.

Don't use a buttery knife in your jam pot and it should keep in the fridge for six months or so.

Filling the house with fruity steam and BBC Radio 4 is my favourite way to celebrate the season

A handful of feral raspberry canes inhabit a shady corner of my garden and bring me a fleeting shock of raspberries twice a year

INGREDIENTS
- 300g raspberries
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 fresh sprigs of lemon balm
- 150g white caster sugar
- 500ml vodka

Raspberry, lemon balm and bay vodka

Makes approximately 500ml

A handful of feral raspberry canes inhabit a shady corner of my garden and bring me a fleeting shock of raspberries twice a year. If I can get to them before the bolshie pigeons and rampaging woodlice, I have about the right amount for this recipe with a few extra for my daughter Esme to keep her sweet.

Lemon balm grows easily among my unruly rosemary and sage, spreading without much encouragement. It's great if you, like me, have grand plans for growing yet in reality you are high on enthusiasm but low on time. The bay I snaffle from my mum's just down the road, a plant that came from my granny's garden many years ago. It is an underused herb, in my mind mostly reserved for stews. In recent years, however, I've experimented with adding it to sweet things such as home-made custard.

METHOD
- Pop your raspberries in a sterilised clip-top jar. If you don't have access to your own autumn raspberries, ask around your friends because it's the sort of thing people get large crops of and are happy to share.
- Give your lemon balm and bay a bash, have a good whiff of them, then add to the jar. Add the sugar and vodka, then close the jar.
- Give it sporadic shakes throughout the day to make sure everything is dissolved together.
- Store the jars out of direct light and leave for a couple of weeks, watching the raspberries turn the vodka an almost ethereal deep-rouge hue.
- After two weeks, when you can wait no longer to sample the vodka, strain the mix through a muslin or very fine sieve into a clean bowl, and decant into a sterilised glass bottle. With the boozy raspberry mush that remains you can make some wicked muffins simply by stirring into a basic recipe at the end before baking.

I keep my liquor in the fridge because it's most pleasing to have a little chilled tot of an evening, when the little one is in bed and the fading light fills a small corner of the garden. It's so delicious you'll finish it off way before it's past its best, but you've got a good year to do this.

Immune-boosting hedgerow brew

Makes roughly 1 litre

INGREDIENTS

- 500g hedgerow fruit – rosehips, hawthorn berries, sloes, blackberries, elderberries
- 750ml water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5 cardamom pods, crushed
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- 10g fresh ginger, thickly grated
- 10g fresh turmeric, thickly grated
- Peel of 1 lemon
- Peel of 1 orange
- ½ jar of honey
- 15ml apple cider vinegar

There's something wonderfully witchy about throwing your foraged finds into a pot to bubble with spices and citrus. Less 'eye of newt' and more woodland magic is the vibe, with these berries packed full of vitamin C and anti-inflammatory properties. Once you have acquainted yourself with hedgerow edibles, your eyes will become attuned, spying heavy drooped bundles of elderberries and the white purple glare of a blackberry caught in late-summer sunlight.

You will be able to tell your haws from your rosehips and the deep-purple hue of the sloe settled among thorny blackthorn will incite a flutter of excitement. Try to use a variety of berries to make the most of their different flavours and nutritional goodies. Take only what you need because there are many little creatures dependent on these hedgerow jewels for their supper.

This is a sweet and punchy tonic, halfway between a cordial and a syrup, and enjoyable as a quick shot after breakfast or diluted as a longer drink. Hard facts on the nutritional content aside, I know that when I drink it I feel happy, energised and a little buzzy. The honey, ginger and vinegar add a medicinal quality while the berries and cinnamon hug your innards, giving a nurturing feeling to this simple brew.

METHOD

- De-bug your foraged goods thoroughly, then put all the ingredients in a large pan except for the honey and cider vinegar.
- Bring the pan gently to the boil and allow to simmer for 15 minutes.
- Turn the heat off and leave for an hour or two to steep and infuse. During this time you can sterilise a bottle in which to decant the finished product.
- Place a very fine sieve or muslin over a bowl and pour the liquid through. If using a muslin you can gently squeeze the contents to get all the liquid out, or with a fine sieve you can use the back of a spoon to mush the mix through.
- Add the honey and vinegar to the liquid and stir until dissolved. Pour into a sterilised bottle.

Keep in the fridge and use up in a couple of months. This should help your immune system through autumn until the citrus season comes into view around Christmas, when you can gorge on blood oranges and satsumas.

This is a sweet and punchy tonic, halfway between a cordial and a syrup, and enjoyable as a quick shot after breakfast or diluted as a longer drink

Pink pickled turnip with apple and cardamom

Makes approx. 3 large jars

INGREDIENTS
- 300ml vinegar
- 200ml water
- 25g salt
- 50g white sugar
- 2 star anise
- 4 dried hibiscus
- 6 cardamom pods
- 300g turnip
- 200g beetroot
- 2 regular apples

I am a huge fan of the turnip. A humble root, it is often considered the reject of the veg box, historically fit only for consumption by those down and out or used as animal feed. This unsung hero, which I feel a compulsion to champion, can grow in mineral-poor soil, is rich in vitamin C and is extremely versatile in the kitchen. You can cube and sauté in lashings of butter to stir through pasta dishes, grate and add to sliced red cabbage as the base for a tangy coleslaw or cut into pleasing batons and pickle like in this recipe.

Inspired by those vivid pink pickled delights you may have enjoyed in your local Lebanese, I've added apples (because we all need a glut of apple recipes in autumn) and flavoured with bold characters including star anise, cardamom and hibiscus. These will permeate the pickling solution and enable you to get all the tastes when biting into your crunchy veg. The beetroot is mostly there to make things pretty, although its earthiness does ground all the heady tang and salty whizz of this condiment.

METHOD
- Pop everything apart from the beetroot, turnip and apple into a saucepan and slowly bring to a gentle simmer until the dissolvable things have dissolved. Sterilise your jars and take out a big bowl.
- Julienne (chop into matchstick-shaped pieces) the vegetables. Take your time. See it as a mindful activity and embrace slowing down. Peel everything, doing the apples last so they don't turn brown. You want to end up with small pieces the sort of size you can imagine popping in your mouth. They will be accompanying something so only need to play a supporting role.
- Pop all your veg into the bowl and mix to get an even spread of each.
- Cram your mixed veg into the jars quite densely, then pour the pickling solution over each. If you are short on liquid, you can top up with boiled water. Give them a shake to make sure there are no air bubbles, then set aside to cool.

You can keep these in the fridge for a few months and use them in sandwiches, or to accompany stews and curries. They are especially good served with baked feta, tabbouleh and minty yoghurt.

> This unsung hero, which I feel a compulsion to champion, is rich in vitamin C and extremely versatile in the kitchen

Treasure trail

Landscape architect Matt Evans has turned his typically long, narrow, town garden in Bath into a plantsman's paradise

WORDS **VERONICA PEERLESS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

IN BRIEF

What Small city garden filled with a mix of familiar garden favourites and many unusual (often edible) plants.
Where Bath.
Size 4m x 30m.
Soil Clay (but free draining).
Aspect Southwest-facing.
Designed by Matt Evans (mattevanslandscapes.com).

This image In his own small, skinny garden, landscape architect Matt Evans (above right) chose not to change the existing layout but instead to take up the lawn so he could pack in as many plants as possible.

When Matt Evans moved into his terraced house in Bath in 2020, he was confronted with what many of us face in a new garden – a lawn, some tired hard landscaping and a motley selection of structures. Matt is a chartered landscape architect, garden designer and plantsman, but instead of coming up with a completely new design for the long, narrow garden, he decided to make minimal hard landscaping changes and concentrate instead on filling it with rare and unusual plants. “I decided to create a new atmosphere through the planting. I wanted to create a garden full of treasures,” he says.

Matt dug up most of the old lawn to accommodate as many plants as possible. He kept the concrete pavers near the house and the deck at the top, as well as the main path down the left-hand side. “It does the job and gets you from A to B,” says Matt. “This is a long, thin garden, and the linear nature of the path keeps it feeling long and thin. If I had the opportunity again, I’d like to introduce a more sinuous element. But as the planting fills out over the season and the garden becomes more immersive, the linear nature of the garden is lost.” Matt did introduce some curves by breaking up concrete pavers from the patio and building a winding crazy-paving path through the planting.

There are two main sections to the garden. The area around the breakfast terrace by the house is in the shade of an existing, mature *Prunus lusitanica*. “It’s the only large evergreen element in the garden. It drops a lot of leaves and I wouldn’t recommend it, but it’s useful as a mature specimen that holds the space, and its raised canopy and beautiful multi-stems frame the garden beyond”. In this area, Matt has installed a Japanese Tetsu Bachi water feature and surrounded it with lush planting. “This section of the garden ▷

▷ is all about texture and foliage over flowers. Any flowers that I do have are interspersed with lots of green, as I want this part of the garden to feel calming and restorative."

The upper area of the garden is sunnier and receives much of the heat at the end of the day. To hold the space here, Matt has planted a foxglove tree, *Paulownia tomentosa*. "I wanted something quick growing. I can be patient, but some things you don't want to be patient for." He pollards the tree every year to keep it within bounds and to promote its large leaves, which get bigger as the season progresses. The tree is underplanted with sun-loving grasses and perennials, which catch the last of the evening light and form a contrast to the tree's dramatic foliage.

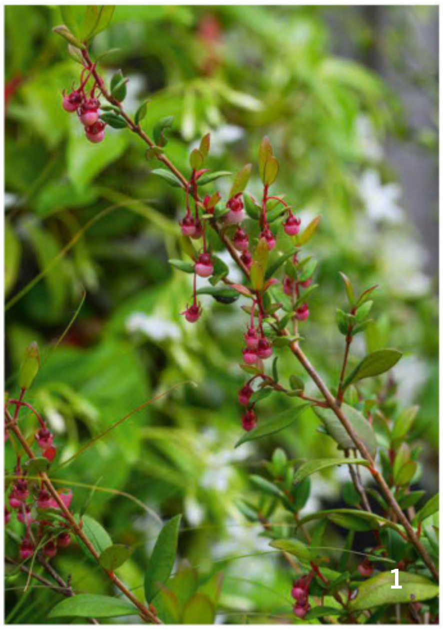
At the end of the garden, Matt replaced the old shed with a custom-built one from Heritage Fencing, then insulated it – a much cheaper option than a garden room. It is used as a studio by Matt's partner Sarah, who is a watercolour artist and calligrapher. Matt built a raised bed in front and filled it with plants, including a multi-stemmed wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*) from Deepdale Trees. "I prune it every year to give it a bit more juice. It has the most amazing scent in winter."

For the past few years, Matt has been experimenting with the planting. "I've used a restrained colour palette that allows me to maximise the number of plants I have, while ensuring that everything still ties together. The more plants I can grow, the more opportunities I have to experiment."

As well as the garden, Matt has two allotment plots. The one close to his house has been turned into an edible gravel garden, while the other, a woodland garden in nearby Keynsham, is full of interesting shade-loving specimens. "I use my allotments as mini nurseries," he says. He also grows lots of plants in pots. "When something comes into flower, you can move it around and try it next to different things."

Rare and unusual plants sourced from specialist nurseries mingle with more familiar garden stalwarts, and contrasting textures and leaf shapes abound. Key anchor evergreens are dotted throughout, including strappy-leaved *Iris lazica,* which has lavender-blue flowers in February; *Heuchera villosa* 'Autumn Bride'; and various sedges such as *Carex rosea* and *C. sprengelii*. The grass *Hakonechloa macra* is also widely used. "I grow it for its foliage, but the autumn colour is amazing. I know everyone uses it, but it's popular for a reason."

The shadier areas are home to *Geranium aristatum*, various species and cultivars of Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum*), ferns including *Polypodium glycyrrhiza* x *P. scouleri*, *Polystichum* x *dycei* and *Dryopteris kuratae*, and epimediums, such as *Epimedium* x *perralchicum* 'Fröhnleiten', which Matt ▷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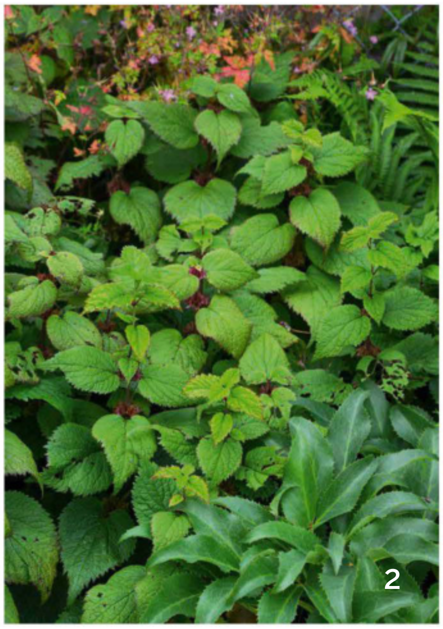
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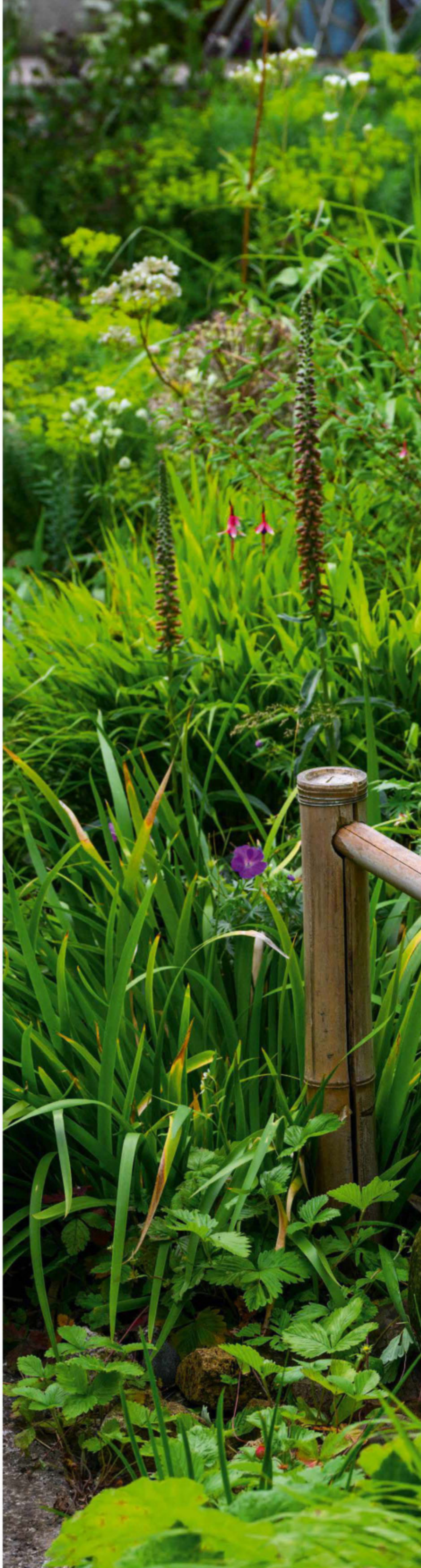
I wanted to create a garden full of treasures… Rare and unusual plants sourced from specialist nurseries



The Japanese Tetsu Bachi water feature is surrounded by textural planting that includes the rich purple flowers of *Geranium sanguineum*, the bronze spikes *Digitalis parviflora*, the tall white flowers of *Valeriana alliariifolia* and the delicate white flowers of *Astrantia major* subsp. *involucrata* 'Shaggy'.

MATT'S KEY PLANTS

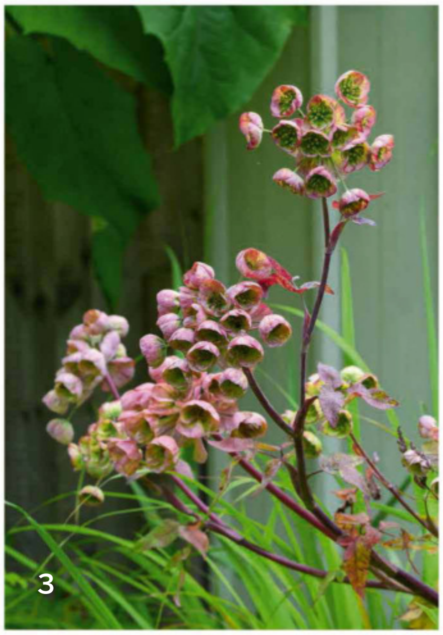
1 *Ugni molinae* Ka'pow (= 'Yanpow') Known as Chilean guava, this is an attractive evergreen shrub with nodding pink flowers and edible berries. Height and spread: 1.5m x 1m. RHS H4†.

2 *Lamium orvala* A dead nettle with attractive heart-shaped, slightly hairy leaves, here growing alongside the foliage of *Helleborus argutifolius*. Good groundcover for a shady spot. It flowers from March to July and provides early nectar for bees. 50cm x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 7a-11.

3 *Mathiasella bupleuroides* Bears umbels of small, green flowers in summer and autumn. They are surrounded by bracts that are pink-tinted with age. Grow in full sun. 1.5m x 1m. RHS H5.

4 *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Waldenbuch' A feather reed grass with a slightly more open habit than the popular cultivar 'Karl Foerster'. Sun or part shade. 1.8m x 70cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

Key plants continue on page 80 ▷



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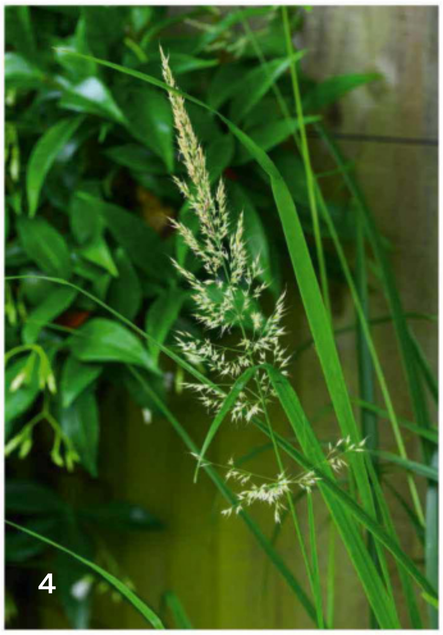

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▷ says is pretty much the toughest for dry shade. Matt also has three different species of the nettle-like *Boehmeria* – "they're great plants, and so easy to look after" – and *Maianthemum tatsienense*, which was spotted on Tom Stuart-Smith's garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

The sunnier areas of the garden are home to bright and colourful blooms such as *Allium obliquum*, *Euphorbia sarawschanica*, *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went', *Verbascum bombyciferum* 'Polarsommer', *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder' and *Leonurus cardiaca* 'Grobbebol'.

For groundcover, Matt uses wild strawberries. "My parents had a wild garden in Dorset, and one of my fondest childhood memories is picking and eating the little berries." Matt sowed a pack of seeds in the shady part of the garden three years ago, and they have now spread to carpet the ground. "I don't really have to weed the garden because of them. I think it's an amazing plant. When it is in flower, it's a sea of white stars everywhere. And the berries don't seem to get eaten by birds."

A long, thin garden also comes with a lot of fencing, so Matt has clothed this in a variety of climbers, including star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera henryi* 'Copper Beauty') and the chocolate vine (*Akebia quinata*).

"I love the idea of plants having a use and I've included a lot of unusual edibles," Matt says. He grows Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa)* – "If you pick the berries late, they taste like salted caramel"; *Peltaria alliacea*, which has garlic-flavoured leaves; a Japanese pepper, *Zanthoxylum piperitum* var. *inerme*, which has lemony leaves that are great for a salad; and *Ugni molinae* Ka'pow (= 'Yanpow'), known as Chilean guava, which tastes like strawberries and was reputedly Queen Victoria's favourite fruit. Other edibles include *Citrus trifoliata*, which bears citrus-like fruits; *Cardamine bulbifera*, which has an edible leaf and root; Japanese balloon berry (*Rubus illecebrosus*); and Augustine Henry's blackberry (*Rubus henryi*). He also grows the ornamental but invasive *Petasites japonicus* – "You can eat the leaf stems and emerging flower shoots, which are a delicacy in Japan" – in a large trough.

Matt and Sarah recently welcomed a baby boy, Benjamin, who finds the water feature very calming. Is Matt planning on making changes to the garden to accommodate him as he grows? "I hope the garden gets him exploring," he says. "We've got parks nearby for him to run around in, and the garden lets me enjoy my plant addiction. I spend a lot of time in the evenings, especially now we've got the baby, browsing nursery catalogues online. Sarah is always saying, 'Another delivery has come – where are you going to put it this time?' But I can always find a place." ☐

MATT'S KEY PLANTS

CONTINUED

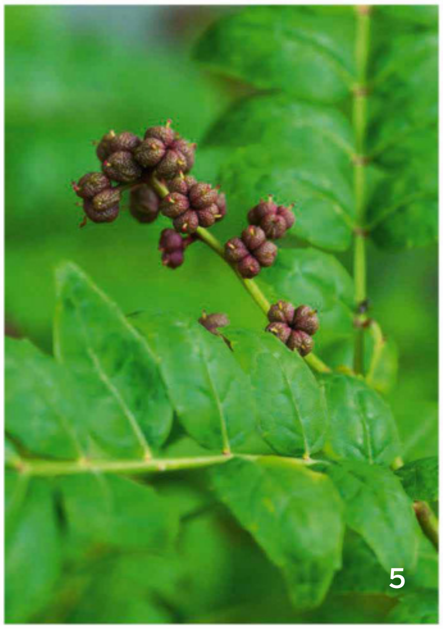
5 *Zanthoxylum piperitum* var. *inerme* This Japanese pepper has aromatic leaves and bark. Small, yellow flowers in early summer give way to red fruits. 2.5m x 2.5m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

6 *Polypodium glycyrrhiza* x *P. scouleri* This hybrid of the licorice fern and leather-leaf fern has large, shiny, evergreen fronds. Tough and easy to grow in shade. 45cm x 45cm.

7 *Thalictrum* 'Anne' A tall perennial with purple stems, blue-green leaves and purple buds that open to creamy-white flowers in summer. Best in part shade. 2.5m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

8 *Boehmeria japonica* A non-stinging member of the nettle family with a slightly exotic feel to its serrated leaf. 1.2m x 1.5m. USDA 5a-8b.

†Hardiness ratings given where available.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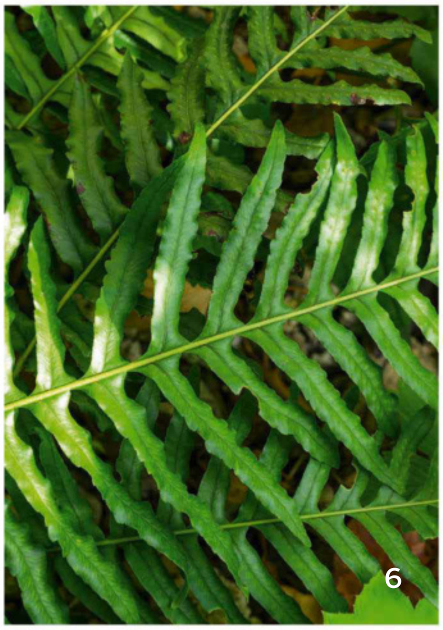
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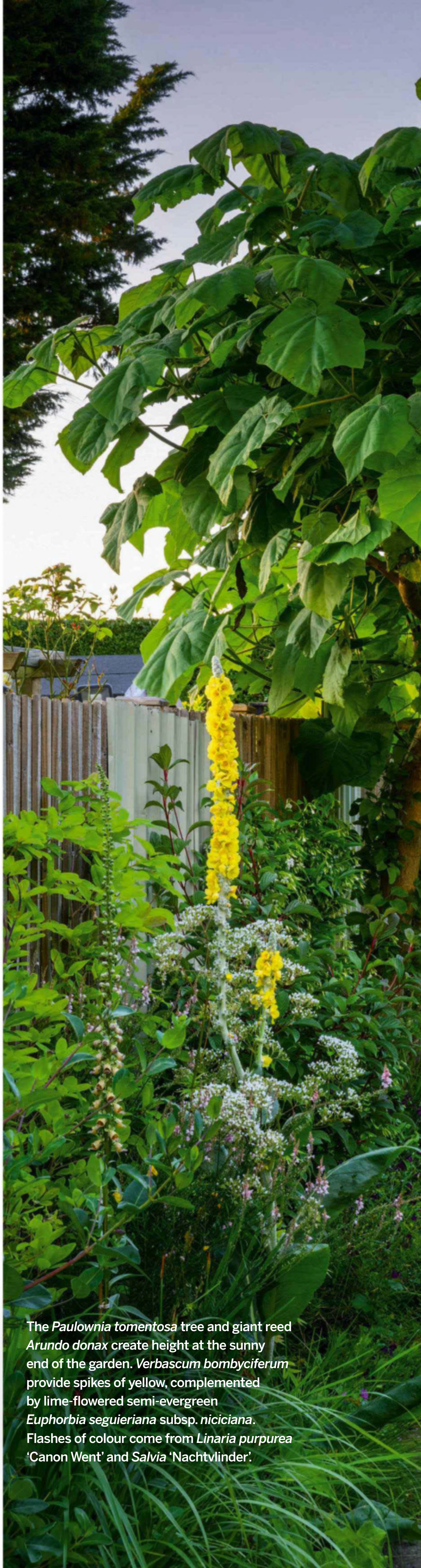
The *Paulownia tomentosa* tree and giant reed *Arundo donax* create height at the sunny end of the garden. *Verbascum bombyciferum* provide spikes of yellow, complemented by lime-flowered semi-evergreen *Euphorbia seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana*. Flashes of colour come from *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went' and *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder'.

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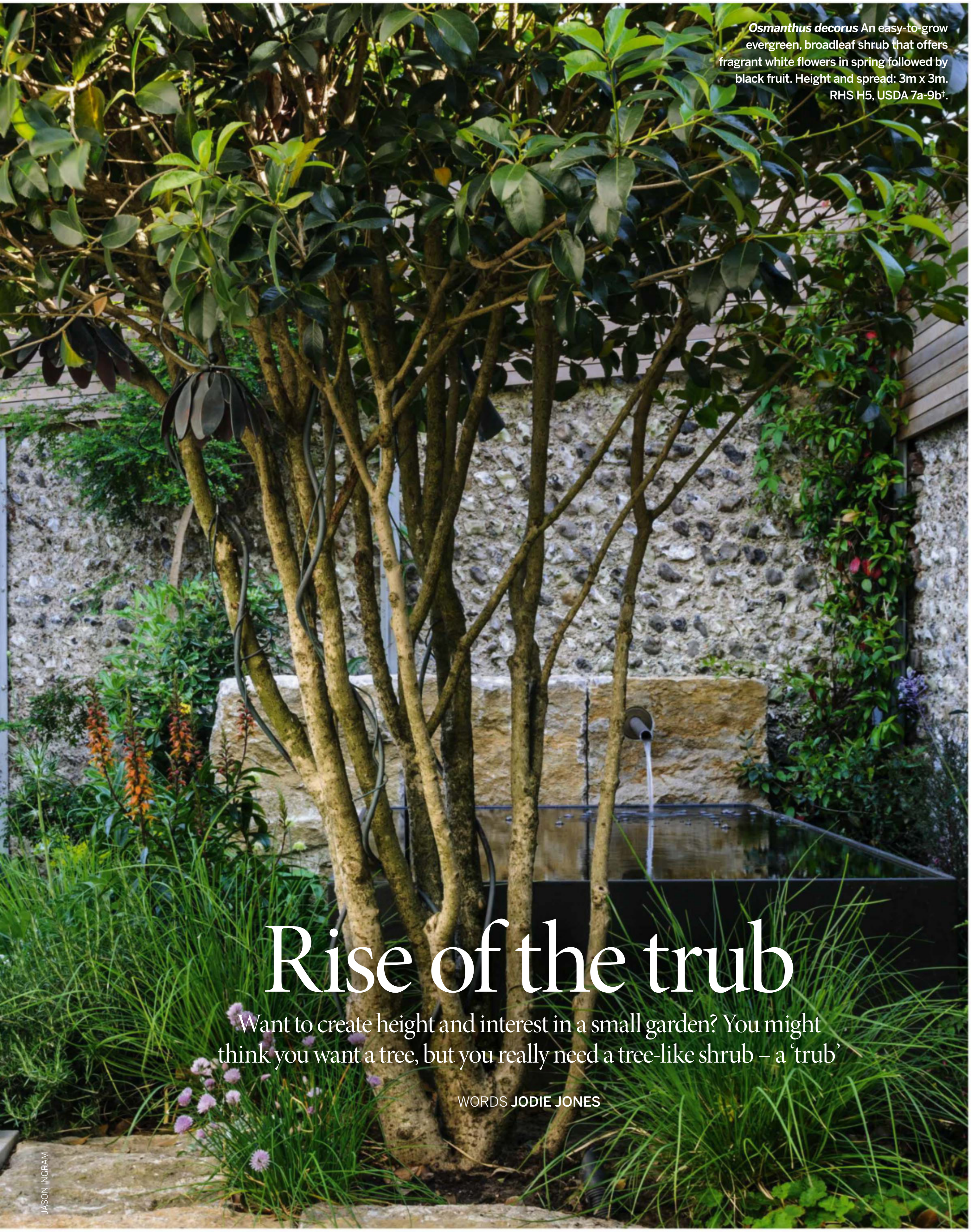
I love the idea of plants having a use, and I've included a lot of unusual edibles



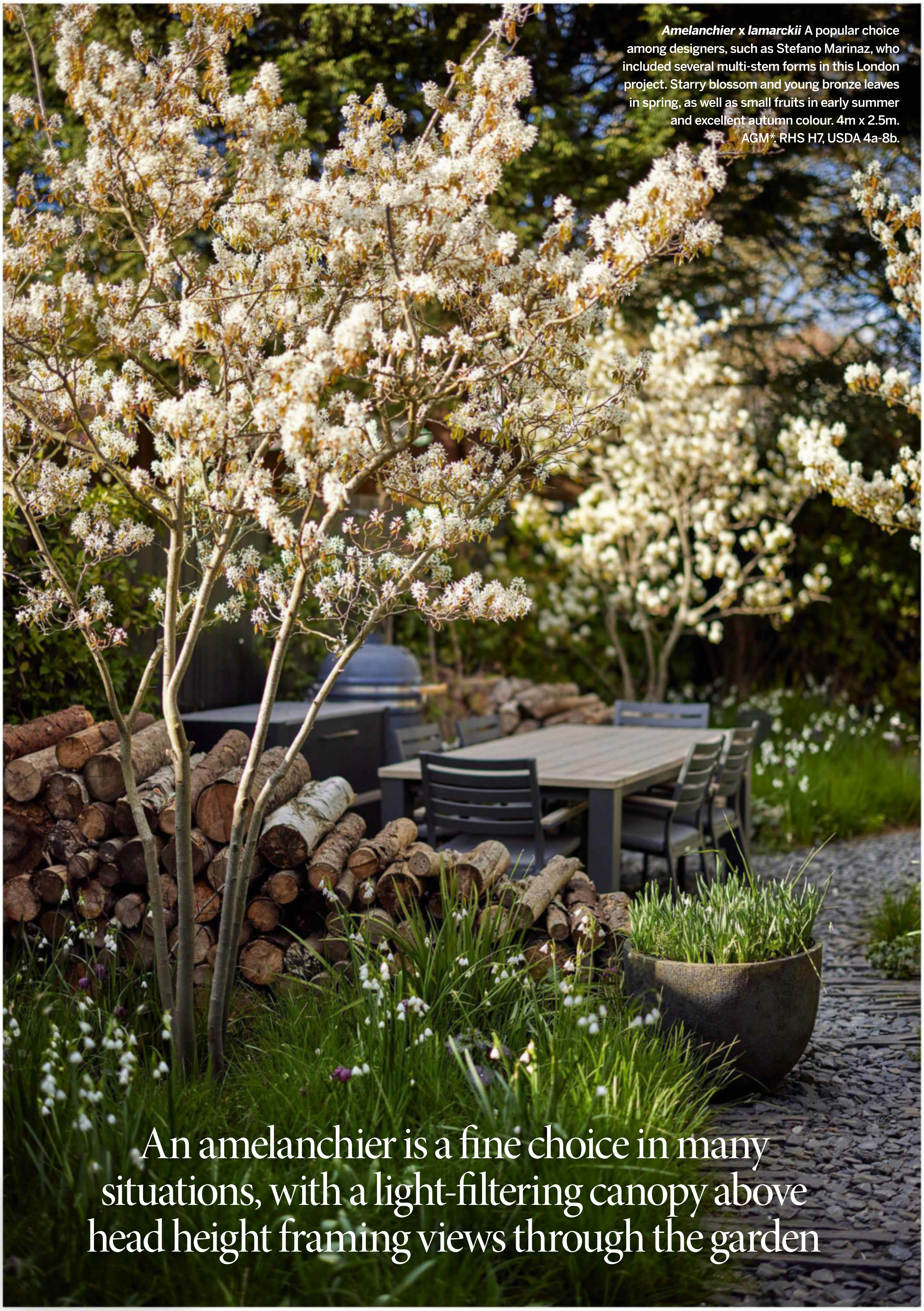
Osmanthus decorus An easy-to-grow evergreen, broadleaf shrub that offers fragrant white flowers in spring followed by black fruit. Height and spread: 3m x 3m. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b[†].

Rise of the trub

Want to create height and interest in a small garden? You might think you want a tree, but you really need a tree-like shrub – a 'trub'

WORDS **JODIE JONES**

JASON INGRAM



Amelanchier x lamarckii A popular choice among designers, such as Stefano Marinaz, who included several multi-stem forms in this London project. Starry blossom and young bronze leaves in spring, as well as small fruits in early summer and excellent autumn colour. 4m x 2.5m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

An amelanchier is a fine choice in many situations, with a light-filtering canopy above head height framing views through the garden

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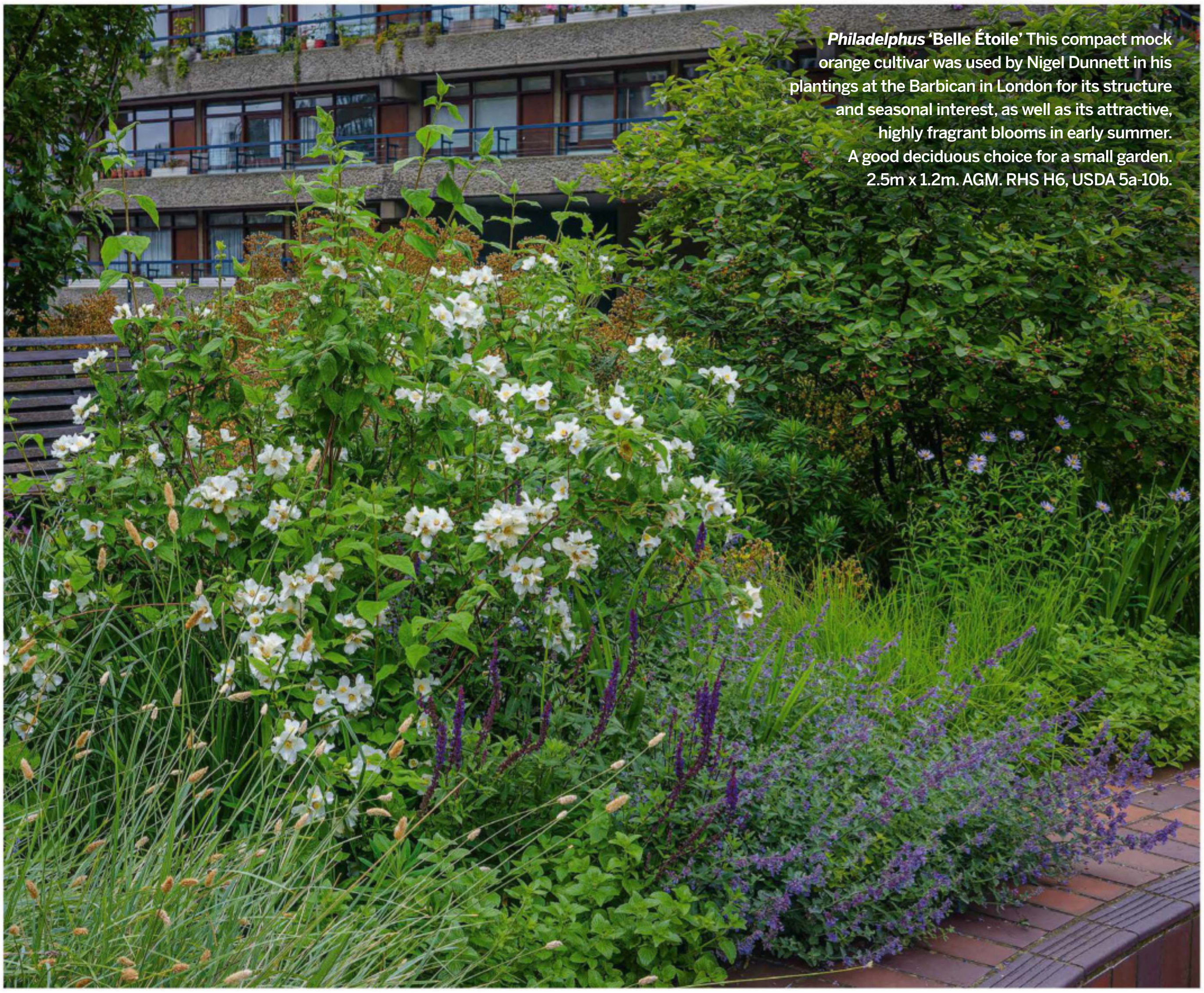
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



***Philadelphus* 'Belle Étoile'** This compact mock orange cultivar was used by Nigel Dunnett in his plantings at the Barbican in London for its structure and seasonal interest, as well as its attractive, highly fragrant blooms in early summer. A good deciduous choice for a small garden. 2.5m x 1.2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-10b.

There are lots of good reasons to plant a tree. It will give your garden structure, introduce seasonal interest and support a wide range of wildlife. But even those trees that are recommended for smaller gardens will become quite large in time, and the sort of multi-stemmed specimens that are currently favoured by garden designers are expensive and often surprisingly difficult for home gardeners to get their hands on.

So perhaps what you should actually be planting is a large shrub. After all, according to the Royal Horticultural Society, it can sometimes be hard to distinguish between a large shrub and a small tree. In general, it advises, 'shrubs tend to produce multiple woody stems that sprout from low down, while trees usually have one tall main trunk.' In other words, if you can get over the shrub's reputation for old-fashioned lumpiness, you will discover an exciting range of naturally multi-stemmed plants that rarely get taller than two or three metres.

Ecological designer Nigel Dunnett is increasingly turning to shrubs in his own naturalistic planting schemes, to introduce structure and biodiversity. "Multi-stems are popular with designers because they give height and structure with transparency, delivered at a human scale. Trees have to be manipulated into multi-stemmed forms, but that is the natural habit of a shrub, which makes it more predictable and manageable.

"Neither option is maintenance free but, especially for less confident gardeners, it is probably not quite as daunting to clear the leafy base of a shrub and lift its canopy, as it is to coppice a tree in order to keep its height under control."

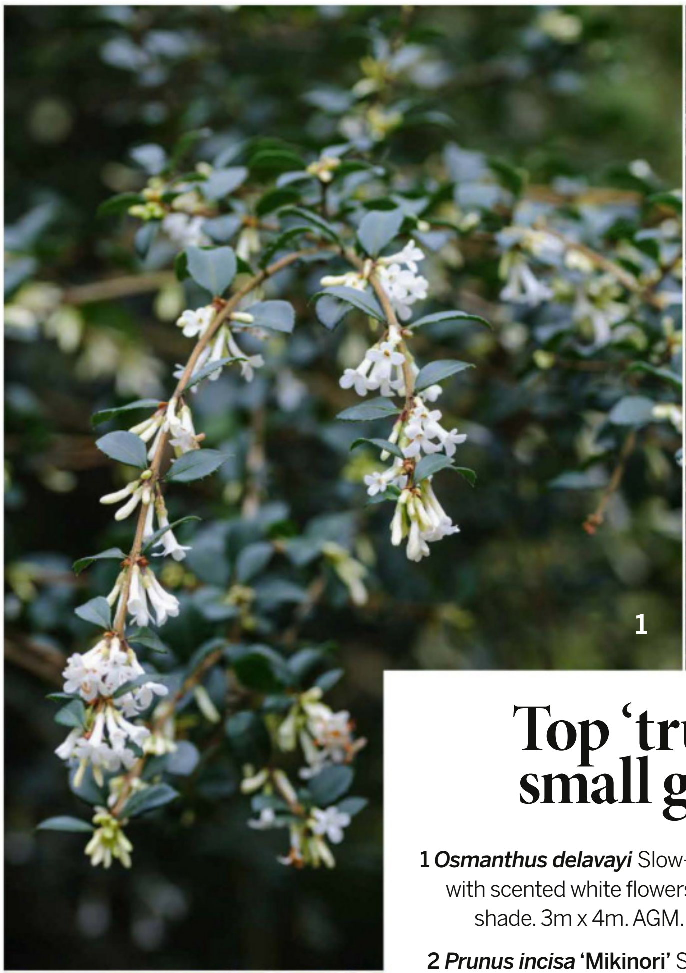
In his landmark scheme at the Barbican in London, Nigel has used a wide range of shrubs, including philadelphus, sorbus, shrub roses and amelanchier, chosen with an eye not only to their structure, but also for their seasonal interest. "There is a certain irony to that," he says. "I have long been associated with the perennial movement, which began as a reaction against the old idea of a shrubbery as a boring monoculture of blobby shapes, but I think we have moved beyond those hard distinctions and should embrace all the available options. Using multi-stemmed shrubs in our Shrub Steppe planting at the Barbican added visually interesting structure, flowers, fruit and autumn colour, but also introduced additional bird habitats that increased the overall wildlife value of the scheme."

Landscape architect Stefano Marinaz has created many elegant gardens in small spaces, particularly for London clients, and values multi-stemmed plants for their sculptural presence. "Personally, I think that a 2-2.5m-high amelanchier is a fine choice in many situations, with a light-filtering canopy above head height framing views out through the garden."

The most important consideration, he says, is to choose shrubs that won't constantly reshoot from the base. "Things like viburnum, hamamelis and osmanthus become woody quite quickly, giving a sense of age and character to the stems and making maintenance easier. It is a simple job to remove any young suckers that appear low down when there is such a big difference between the multi-stemmed framework that you want to keep, and the soft young growth that you need to remove." ▷

To continue turn to page 88

ALISTER THORPE, NIGEL DUNNETT



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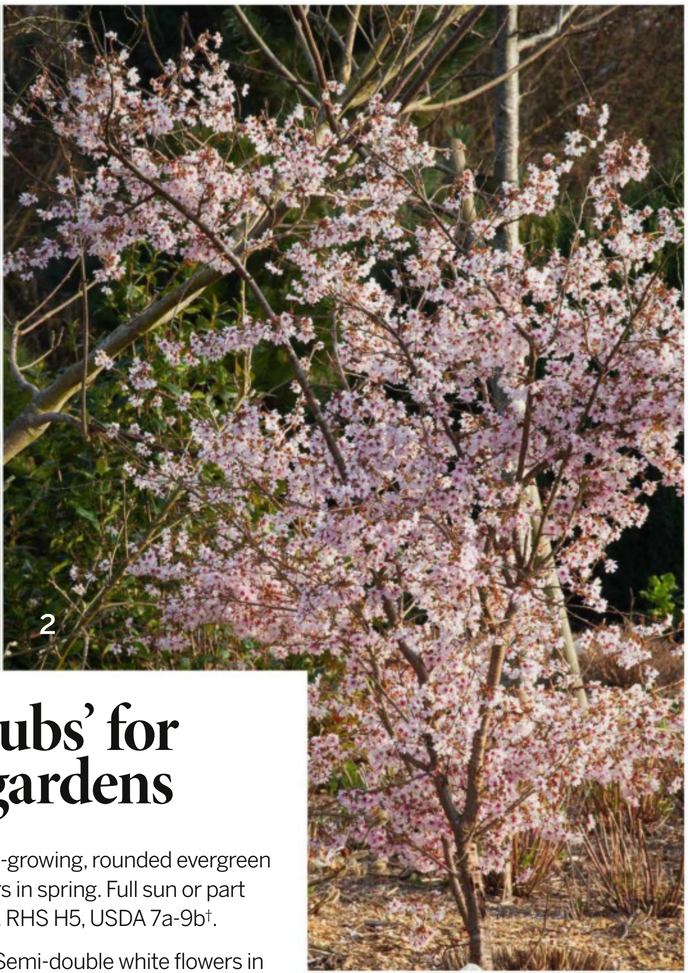

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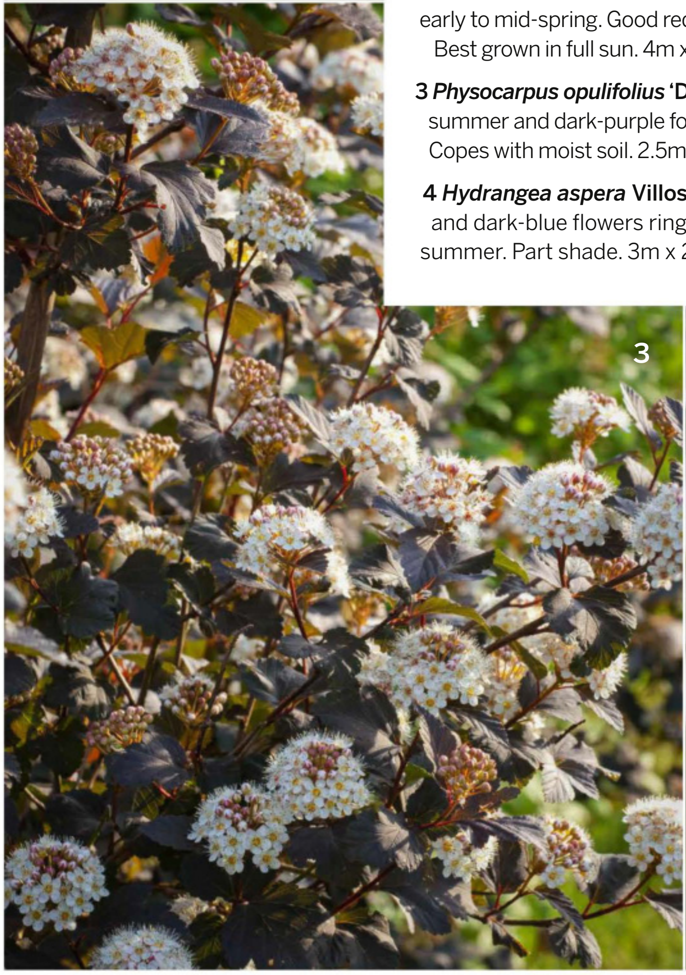
Top 'trubs' for small gardens

1 ***Osmanthus delavayi*** Slow-growing, rounded evergreen with scented white flowers in spring. Full sun or part shade. 3m x 4m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b†.

2 ***Prunus incisa* 'Mikinori'** Semi-double white flowers in early to mid-spring. Good red and orange autumn foliage. Best grown in full sun. 4m x 3m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-8b.

3 ***Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Diabolo'** White flowers in early summer and dark-purple foliage. Full sun or part shade. Copes with moist soil. 2.5m x 2m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

4 ***Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group** Dark-green leaves and dark-blue flowers ringed by mauve florets in late summer. Part shade. 3m x 2.5m. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



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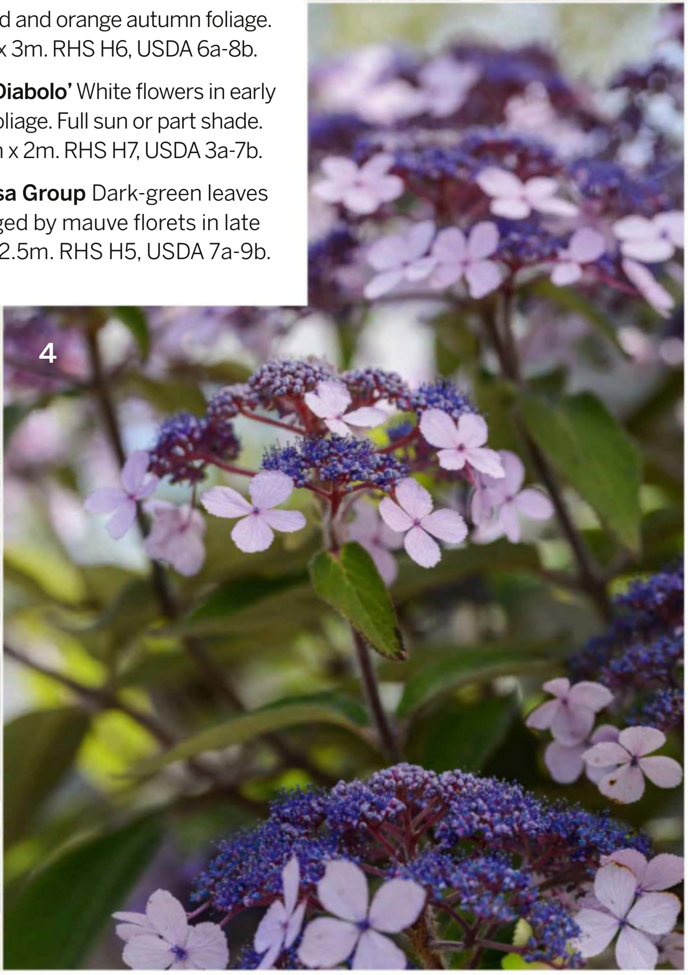

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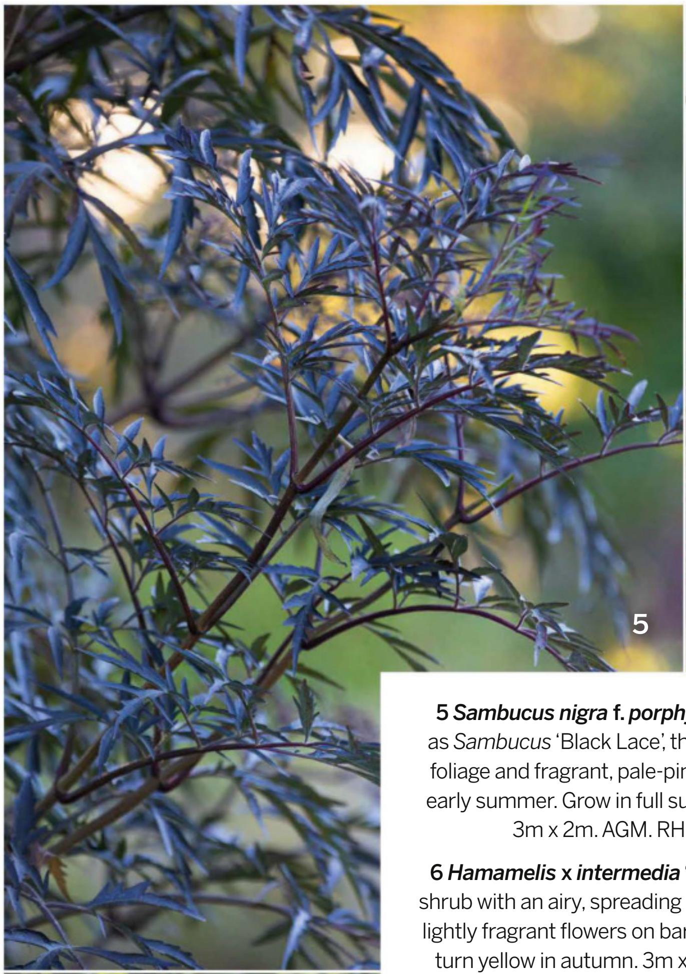
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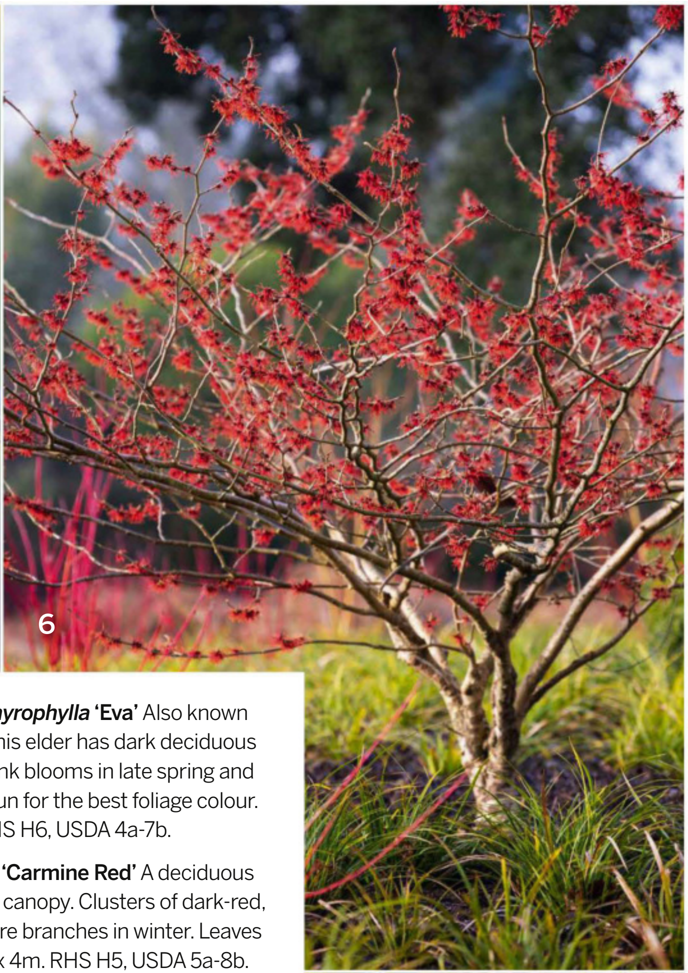
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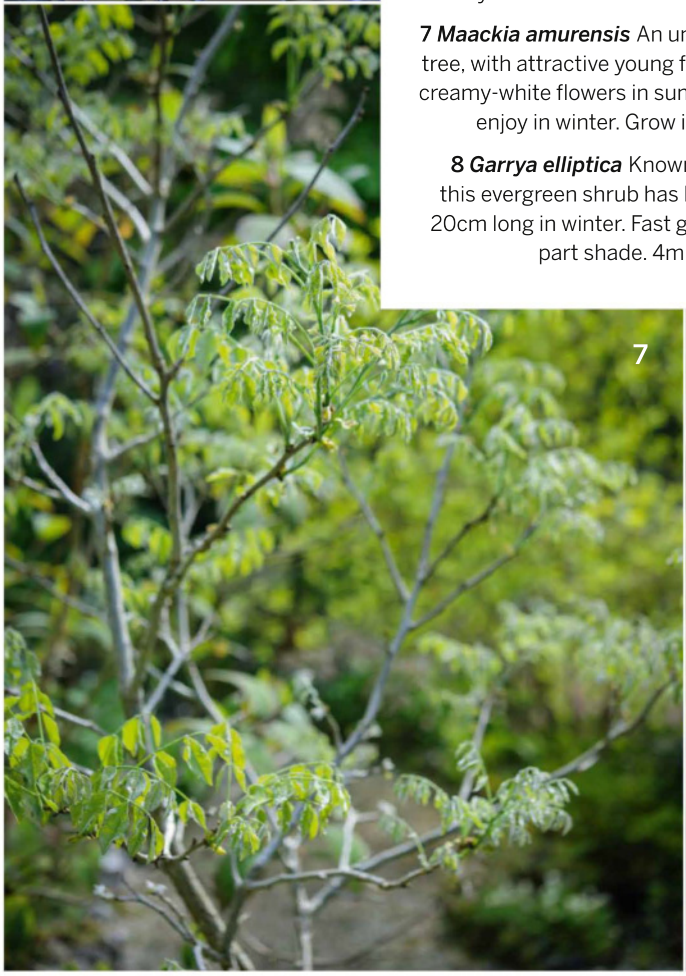
5 *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' Also known as *Sambucus* 'Black Lace', this elder has dark deciduous foliage and fragrant, pale-pink blooms in late spring and early summer. Grow in full sun for the best foliage colour. 3m x 2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

6 *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Carmine Red' A deciduous shrub with an airy, spreading canopy. Clusters of dark-red, lightly fragrant flowers on bare branches in winter. Leaves turn yellow in autumn. 3m x 4m. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

7 *Maackia amurensis* An unusual Asian shrub or small tree, with attractive young foliage in spring, panicles of creamy-white flowers in summer and attractive bark to enjoy in winter. Grow in full sun. 3m x 2.5m.

8 *Garrya elliptica* Known as the silk tassel bush, this evergreen shrub has long, silvery catkins up to 20cm long in winter. Fast growing. Grow in full sun or part shade. 4m x 4m. RHS H4.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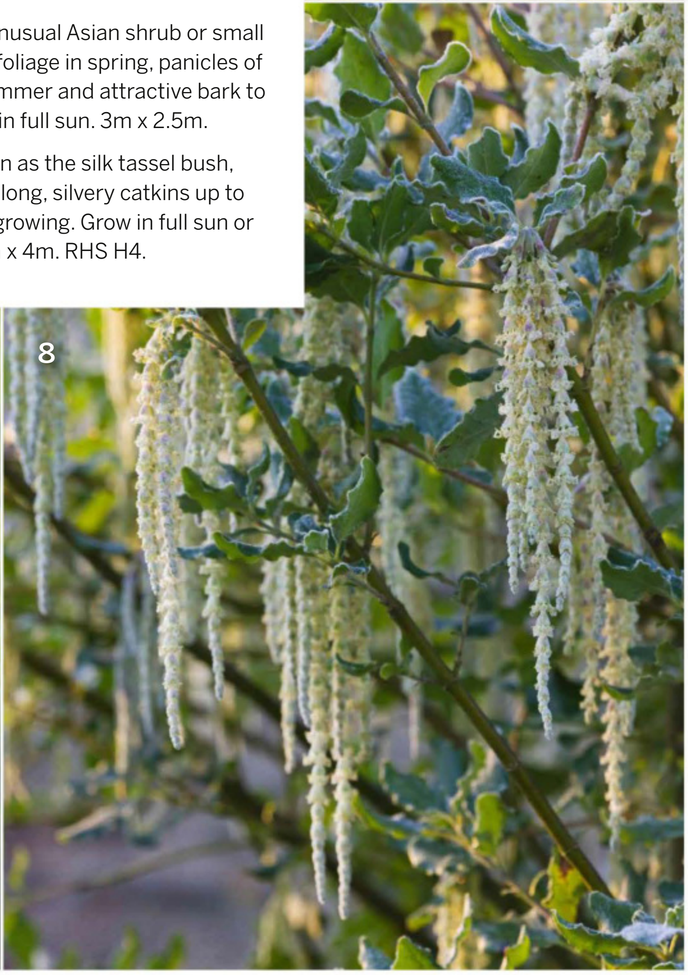
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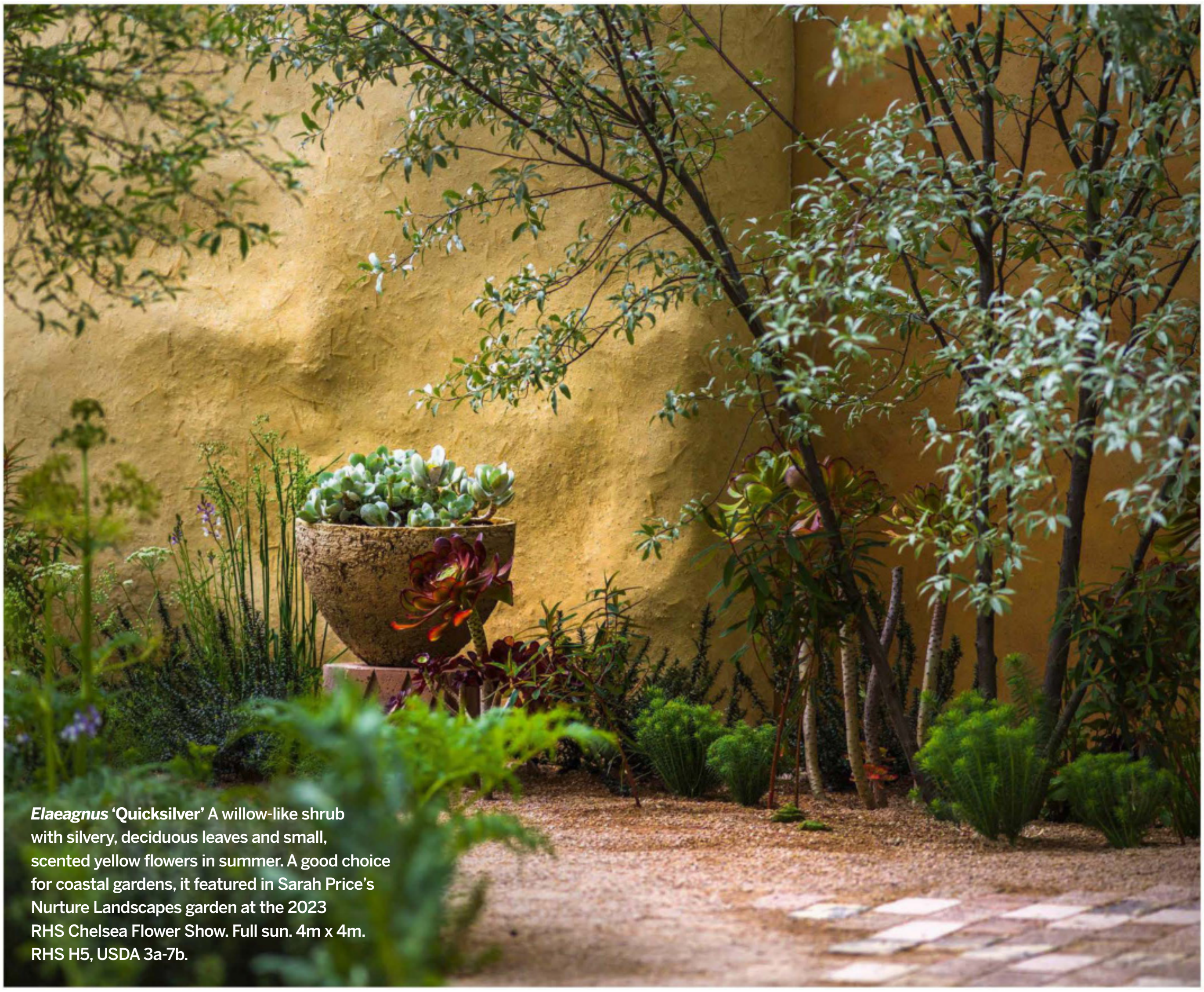
1, 4 & 7 JASON INGRAM; 2 & 3 ELKE BORKOWSKI / GAP PHOTOS; 5 & 6 RICHARD BLOOM; 8 CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS



***Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver'** A willow-like shrub with silvery, deciduous leaves and small, scented yellow flowers in summer. A good choice for coastal gardens, it featured in Sarah Price's Nurture Landscapes garden at the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Full sun. 4m x 4m. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

▷ *Hydrangea aspera* Villosa Group is another shrub Stefano recommends growing as a multi-stem, with the bonus of interesting bark that peels attractively as the plant ages. "And once you lift the canopy you get a beautiful opportunity to plant underneath, maybe with something like a shady-tolerant grass or heuchera, which can look very pleasing."

Sarah Price is a designer who is known for the ecological sensitivity of her gardens, as well as the exquisite beauty of their planting, and uses multi-stemmed shrubs to help build up layers of successional interest. "I certainly wouldn't want to discourage anyone from planting a tree, but it is all about context, and shrubs can be a valuable part of the overall composition," she says.

Her show-stopping Nurture Landscapes Garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2023 included *Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver' in an airy multi-stemmed form that showed off its shimmering foliage to stunning effect, together with *Rosa glauca*, its whippy stems arching down from a high crown. Sarah sometimes pole-trains ivy or wisteria into similarly weeping forms, and was recently inspired by the sight of a *Rubus* 'Benenden' covered in white flowers growing alongside a cercis at Benton End garden in Suffolk. "You can get some beautiful effects if the shrub is managed correctly," she says. "Well-trained *Garrya elliptica* and *Itea* can both be wonderful. Even a *Buddleja* can develop a tree-like character if you prune it right."

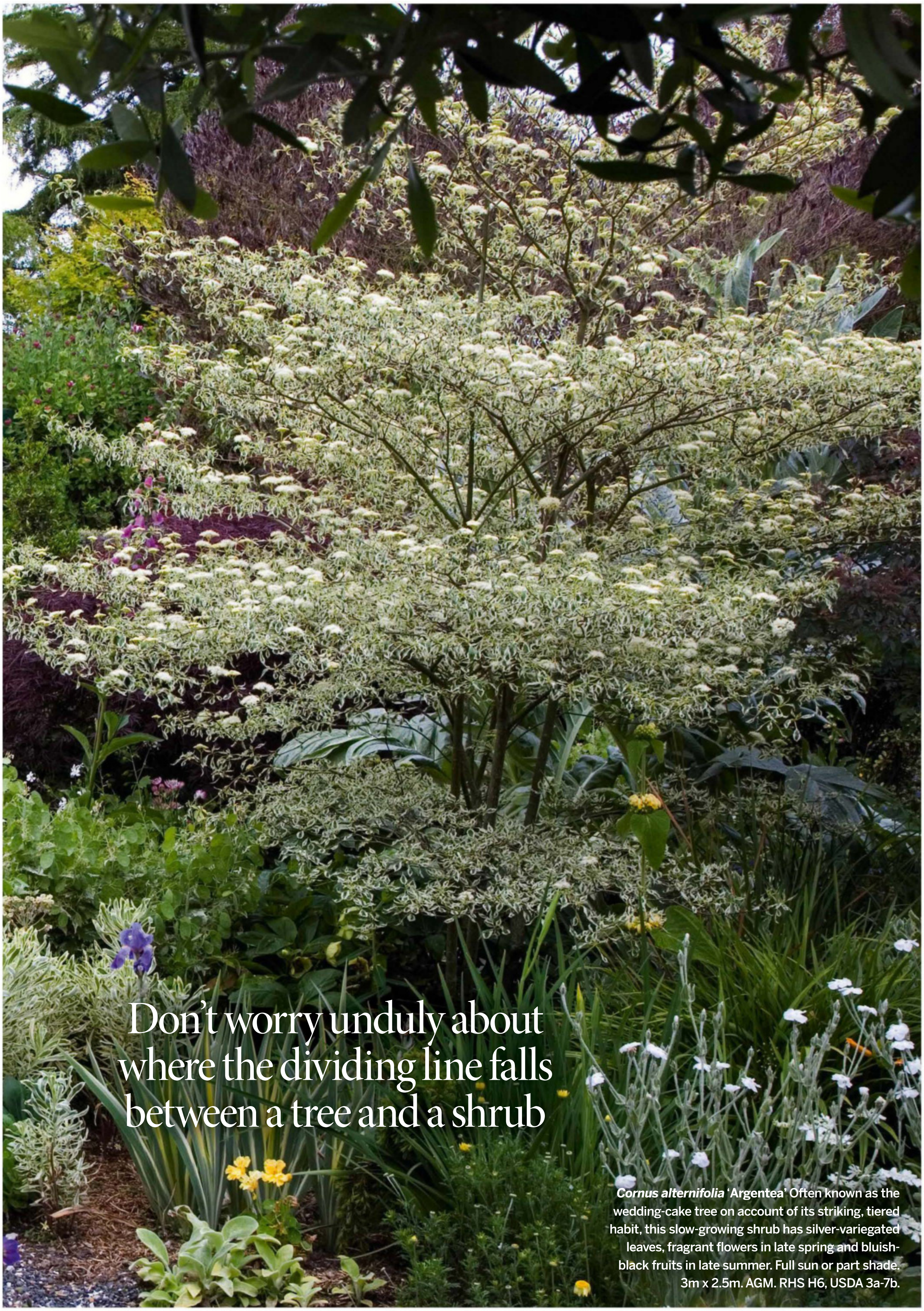
Mat Reese, who worked for years at Great Dixter in East Sussex before going on to create the landmark private gardens at Malverleys in Hampshire, reinforces the point about correct maintenance. "At Malverleys we often work with shrubs in a similar way to Dixter. They can introduce a nice sense of solidity and permanence, especially in a new garden. They aren't always quick to establish but can be trained to look like a tree and many have an ultimate height of a couple of metres, in contrast to an actual tree that will keep on growing."

Many of the shrubs he recommends, including *Prunus incisa* 'Mikinori', *Staphylea holocarpa* var. *rosea* and *Maackia amurensis*, are routinely listed as either a shrub or small tree, underlining the point that in many ways the distinction is irrelevant in a garden setting. "What you really need to think about is where and how you use them," says Mat. "Essentially, they are all little trees with strong skeletons that can set up a nice conversation between the garden and the wider landscape.

"Lots have wonderful flowers. *Magnolia liliiflora* 'Nigra' produces masses of gorgeous tulip-shaped flowers from spring to summer. Others, including *Osmanthus delavayi* have bark that develops an aged character relatively quickly. And many, such as *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva', will produce attractive fruit as well."

So, don't worry unduly about where the dividing line falls between a tree and a shrub. Poodle-clip a *Phillyrea angustifolia* in cloud-like niwaki style; embrace the naturally layered elegance of the variegated *Cornus alternifolia* 'Argentea'; or winter prune a *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Diabolo' to thin its bulk, while leaving four or five elegant wand-like stems to carry the new season's growth.

In the garden (as in the world beyond the gate) diversity is the key to resilience. Let's just call them all 'trubs', and celebrate the possibilities they have to offer, in both small and larger gardens. ◻



Don’t worry unduly about where the dividing line falls between a tree and a shrub

Cornus alternifolia **‘Argentea’** Often known as the wedding-cake tree on account of its striking, tiered habit, this slow-growing shrub has silver-variegated leaves, fragrant flowers in late spring and bluish-black fruits in late summer. Full sun or part shade. 3m x 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

JOANNA KOSSAK, STEVEN WOOSTER / BOTH GAP PHOTOS

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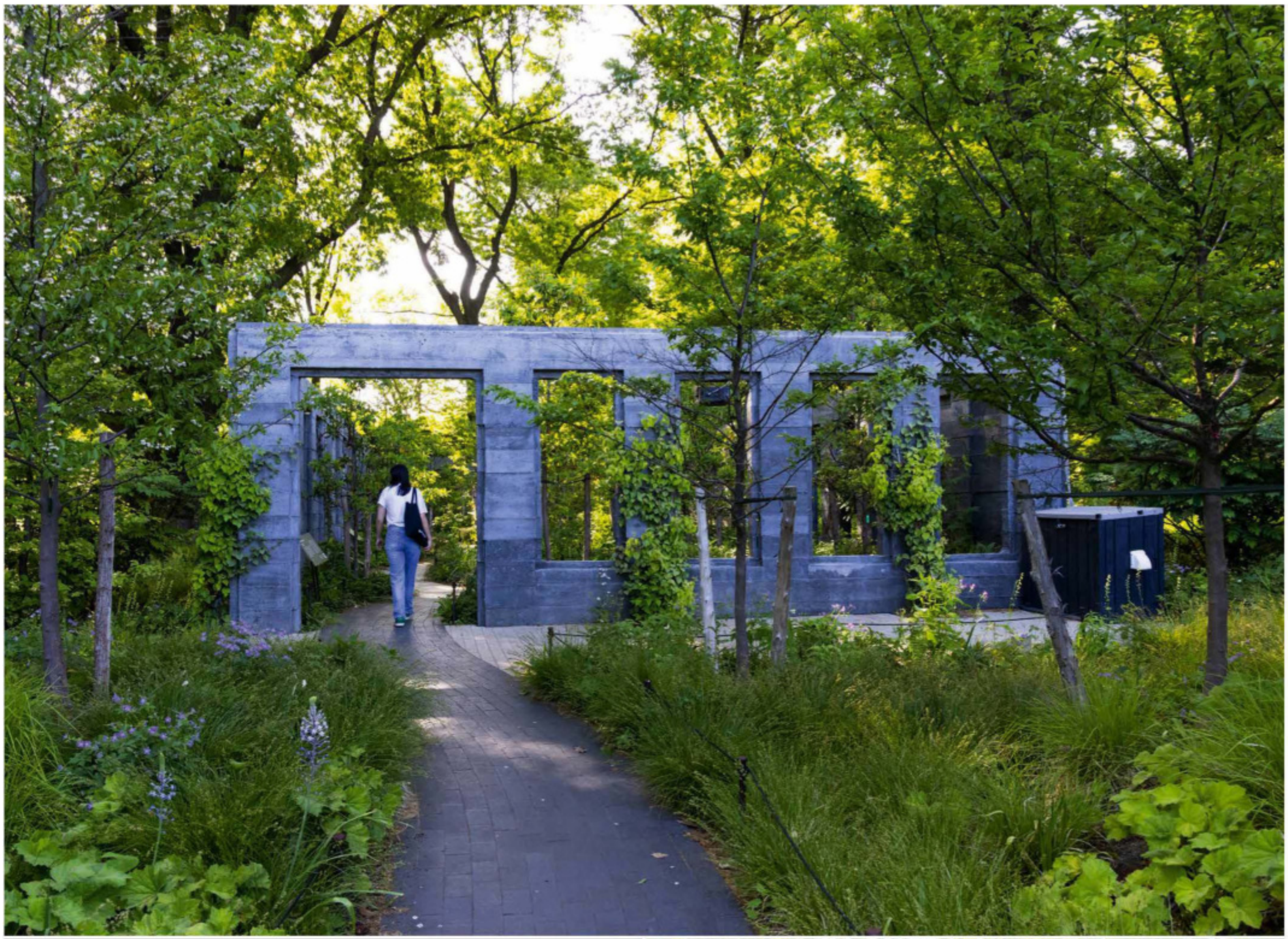
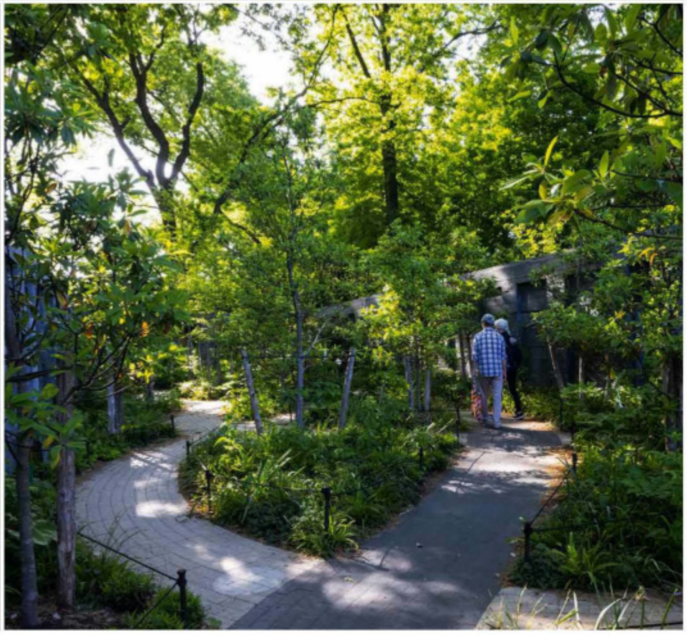


Unfrozen in time

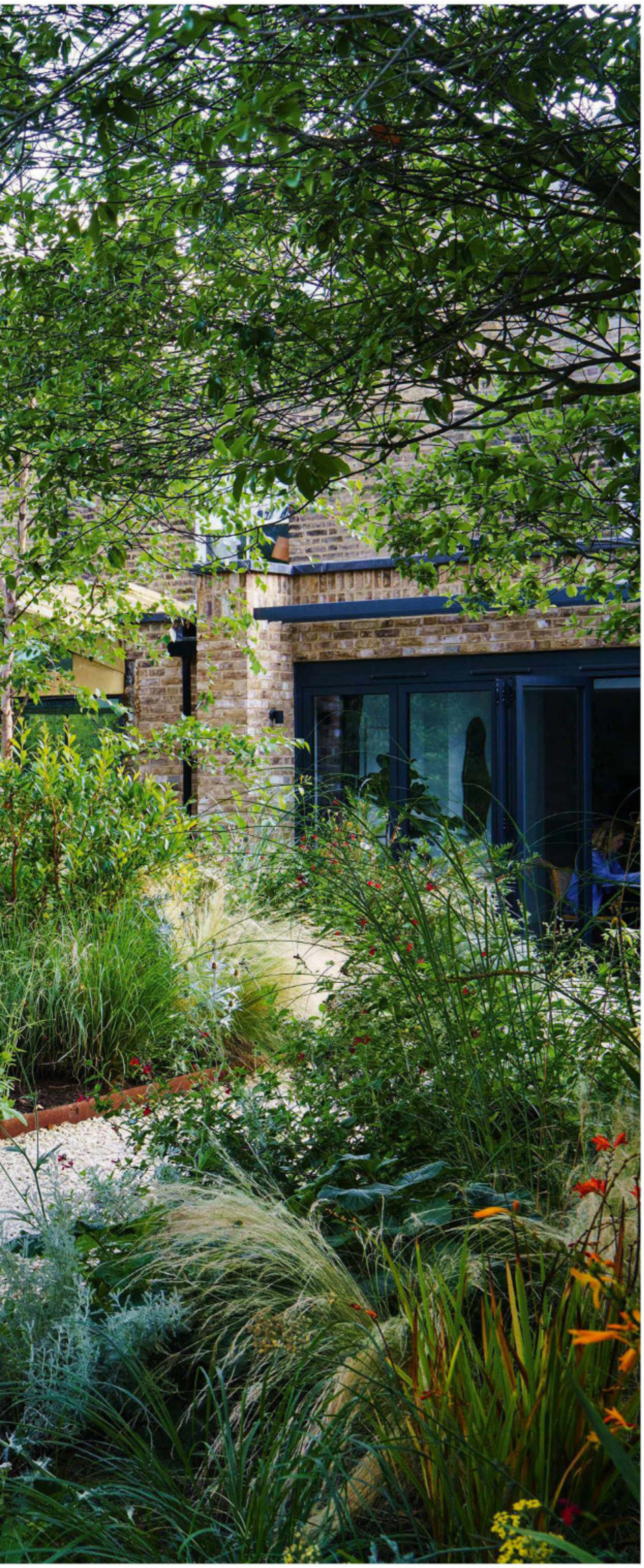
Founded more than a century ago, Brooklyn Botanic Garden is one of the oldest gardens in New York, but is constantly evolving. Among several exciting new areas is the reworking of a woodland garden by landscape architecture practice Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA).

The Elizabeth Scholtz Woodland Garden has transformed a little-known corner of the garden with a cast-in-place concrete structure that evokes a ruin one might unexpectedly come across in a forest. Intersecting brick paths – one white and the other black – meander through a dense carpet of perennials and a grove of *Magnolia virginiana* and tall *Stewartia*. As the dry, shady conditions reflect those found in the backyards of many of the borough's brownstones, MVVA hopes the space can show visitors what can be achieved in their own gardens.

MVVA has also helped the garden to reduce its use of fresh water through a water conservation project that recently won a 2024 Award of Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architects. **mvvainc.com**



LEXI VAN VALKENBURGH



SOFT TOUCH

Tony Woods of design studio Garden Club London has brought order to this previously unloved, small urban garden with a new, linear layout, and a limited palette of materials that is softened by loose and lovely planting

WORDS PAULA McWATERS PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

The brief

The owners of this ground-floor Victorian flat in south London, who have exclusive use of the rear garden, wanted more from their precious outdoor space than the scruffy lawn they inherited, with a terrace too cramped for furniture. "The clients have a real appreciation for nature, and as well as requesting somewhere informal to relax and entertain, they wanted a dynamic garden that would attract wildlife and change with the seasons," says garden designer Tony Woods of Garden Club London. Also, at the back of the garden there is a right of way where the clients hoped to install a parking space.

The design

This small (18.5m x 9.4m) urban garden is overhung by neighbours' trees, but the canopies are high, so it turned out to be less shady than Tony first suspected it would be. With the clients keen for the garden to look quite wild, a linear layout was drawn up that would provide order and demarcate the planting areas and paths, but that would soon be softened and blurred by plant growth.

Having suggested light Cotswold chippings and Egyptian limestone as the main landscaping materials, Tony's first thought here was to extend and replace the existing terrace by the house with paving to match. But the clients' budget was tight and as its slate floor matched the interior of the flat, a decision was made to keep it. Instead, Tony suggested linking it with the rest of the garden by building two wide limestone steps into its retaining brick wall, providing a more inviting transition.

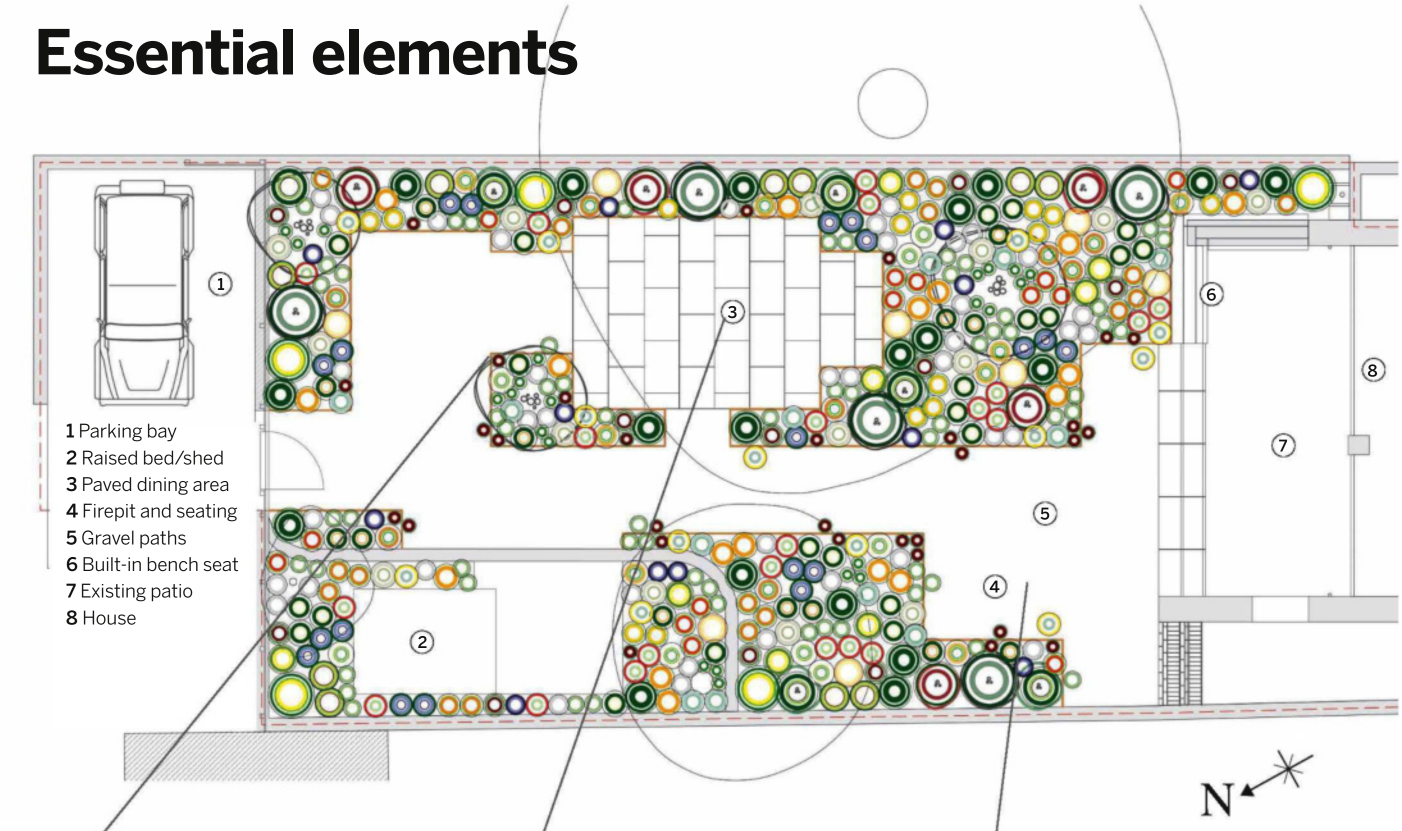
Three sitting areas were proposed, to make the garden more usable and inviting. The first is an L-shaped iroko bench built into the corner of the existing terrace, perfect for stepping outside for a coffee. The second is a two-seat lounging space with firepit, and the third is a dining area for entertaining, defined by a terrace of limestone paving and screened by deep beds of planting.

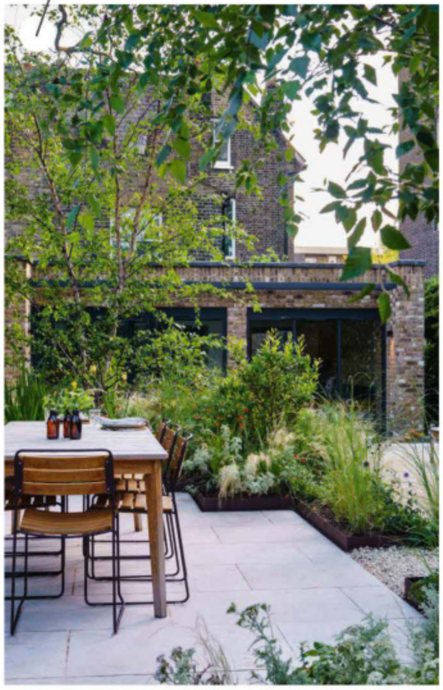
The clients' garden is in a conservation area, so planning permission was required to create a screened-off parking space and alter the line of the rear garden wall. An objection from the local community association meant that Garden Club London needed to present a case for change. Explaining that the off-street parking was for an electric vehicle and would free up a space on the road – and that the proposed garden design would be far more biodiverse than the existing one – won the day.

Turn the page for more design ideas ▷

Left This small garden offers separate areas for eating and relaxing, unified by soft planting. The primary planting aim was to improve biodiversity and add interest throughout the year, with grasses such as *Stipa tenuissima* and reliable flowering perennials, including *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'George Davison' and *C*. Orange Pekoe (= 'Pek Or'), *Geum* 'Totally Tangerine, *Kniphofia* 'Tawny King' and sea holly *Eryngium* x *zabelii* 'Big Blue'.

Essential elements

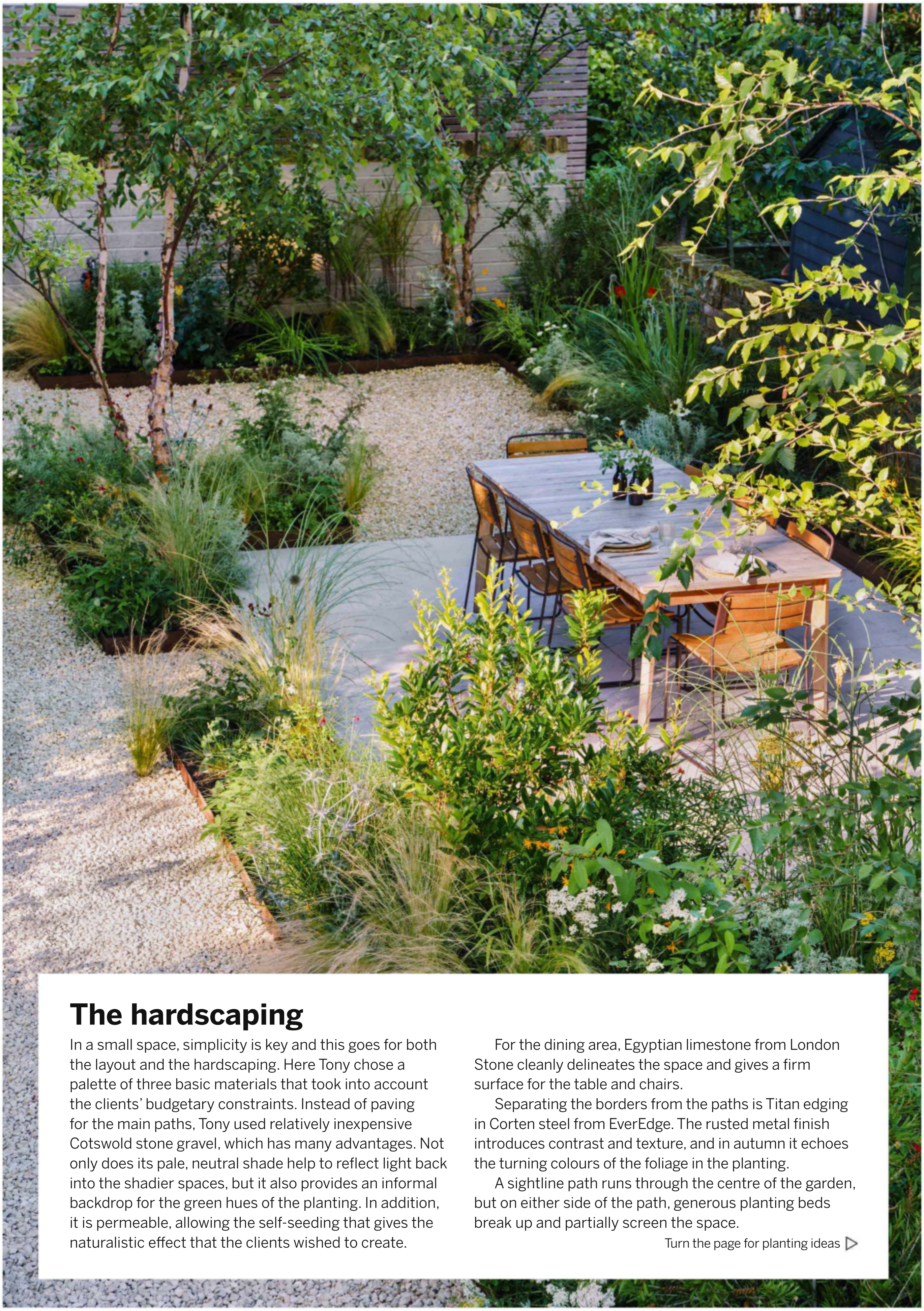




SOFTENING THE EDGES
The planting surrounding this multi-stemmed *Betula nigra* is kept in place with heavy-duty Corten-steel Titan edging from EverEdge, creating a tightly defined line between the planting and the Cotswold stone aggregate from CED Stone that was used for the paths and seating areas. This linear design provides a framework for a much looser style of planting and also allows occasional self-seeders to escape over the planting boundaries and establish themselves into the permeable gravel.

SPACE TO DINE
Crisp Egyptian limestone from London Stone provides a stylish and practical surface for this dining area. The spacious terrace has plenty of room for the owners to site their large teak table from the Conran Shop and stackable Surprising Teak chairs from Fermob, but the generous area is enveloped by layers of planting, including soft grasses and perennials, that help to create a feeling of intimacy. Taller shrubs, such as evergreen *Callistemon citrinus*, help to screen the area from the house.

SITTING COMFORTABLY
Tony wanted the gardens to give the clients scope to extend their living space by providing them with several 'destination spaces' to sit and relax, each surrounded by planting. Close to the house he included built-in, iroko bench seating, while in this space he created an inviting corner area on the Cotswold chippings, with a firepit that doubles as a table, flanked by a pair of Luxembourg low lounge armchairs from Fermob – free-standing furniture that offers flexibility.



The hardscaping

In a small space, simplicity is key and this goes for both the layout and the hardscaping. Here Tony chose a palette of three basic materials that took into account the clients' budgetary constraints. Instead of paving for the main paths, Tony used relatively inexpensive Cotswold stone gravel, which has many advantages. Not only does its pale, neutral shade help to reflect light back into the shadier spaces, but it also provides an informal backdrop for the green hues of the planting. In addition, it is permeable, allowing the self-seeding that gives the naturalistic effect that the clients wished to create.

For the dining area, Egyptian limestone from London Stone cleanly delineates the space and gives a firm surface for the table and chairs.

Separating the borders from the paths is Titan edging in Corten steel from EverEdge. The rusted metal finish introduces contrast and texture, and in autumn it echoes the turning colours of the foliage in the planting.

A sightline path runs through the centre of the garden, but on either side of the path, generous planting beds break up and partially screen the space.

Turn the page for planting ideas ▷

The planting

As the owners are relatively new to gardening, Tony and the studio team selected plants they have tried and tested in London gardens, including *Choisya* x *dewitteana* 'Aztec Pearl', *Kniphofia* 'Tawny King' and *Phlomis russeliana*.

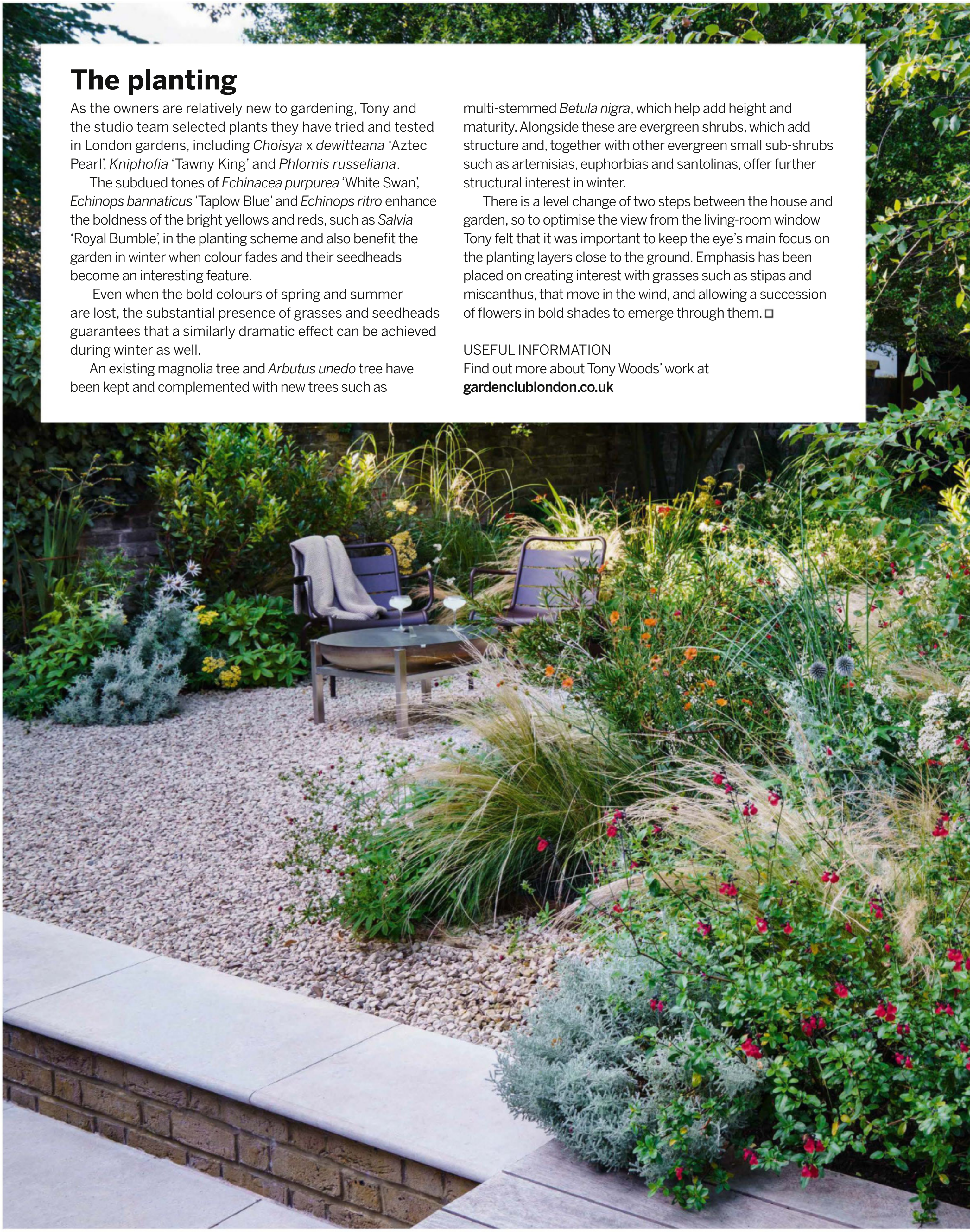
The subdued tones of *Echinacea purpurea* 'White Swan', *Echinops bannaticus* 'Taplow Blue' and *Echinops ritro* enhance the boldness of the bright yellows and reds, such as *Salvia* 'Royal Bumble', in the planting scheme and also benefit the garden in winter when colour fades and their seedheads become an interesting feature.

Even when the bold colours of spring and summer are lost, the substantial presence of grasses and seedheads guarantees that a similarly dramatic effect can be achieved during winter as well.

An existing magnolia tree and *Arbutus unedo* tree have been kept and complemented with new trees such as multi-stemmed *Betula nigra*, which help add height and maturity. Alongside these are evergreen shrubs, which add structure and, together with other evergreen small sub-shrubs such as artemisias, euphorbias and santolinas, offer further structural interest in winter.

There is a level change of two steps between the house and garden, so to optimise the view from the living-room window Tony felt that it was important to keep the eye's main focus on the planting layers close to the ground. Emphasis has been placed on creating interest with grasses such as stipas and miscanthus, that move in the wind, and allowing a succession of flowers in bold shades to emerge through them. ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Tony Woods' work at **gardenclublondon.co.uk**



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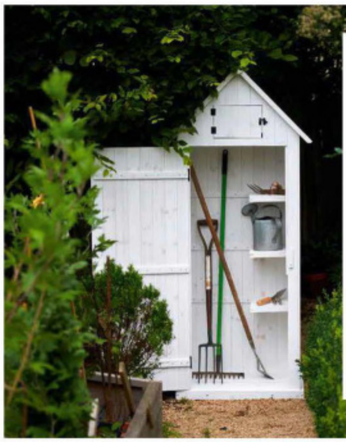

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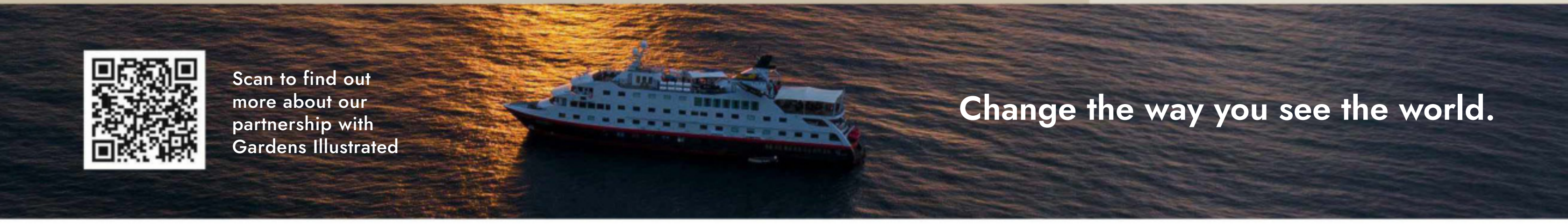

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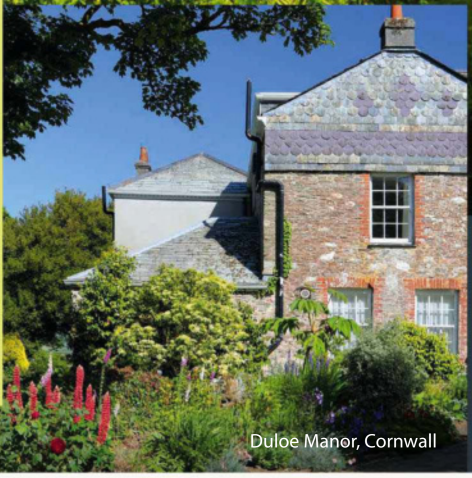

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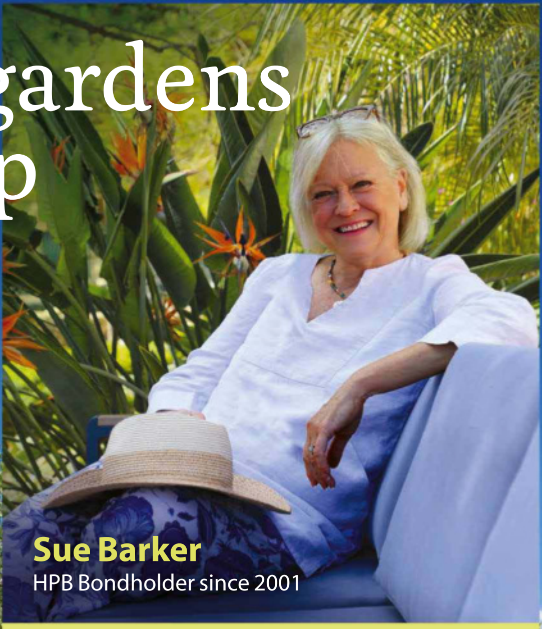

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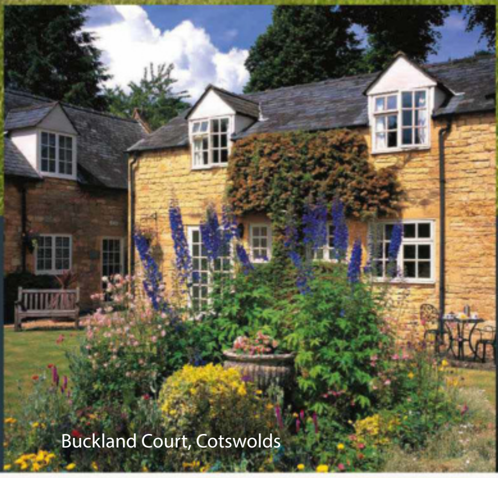

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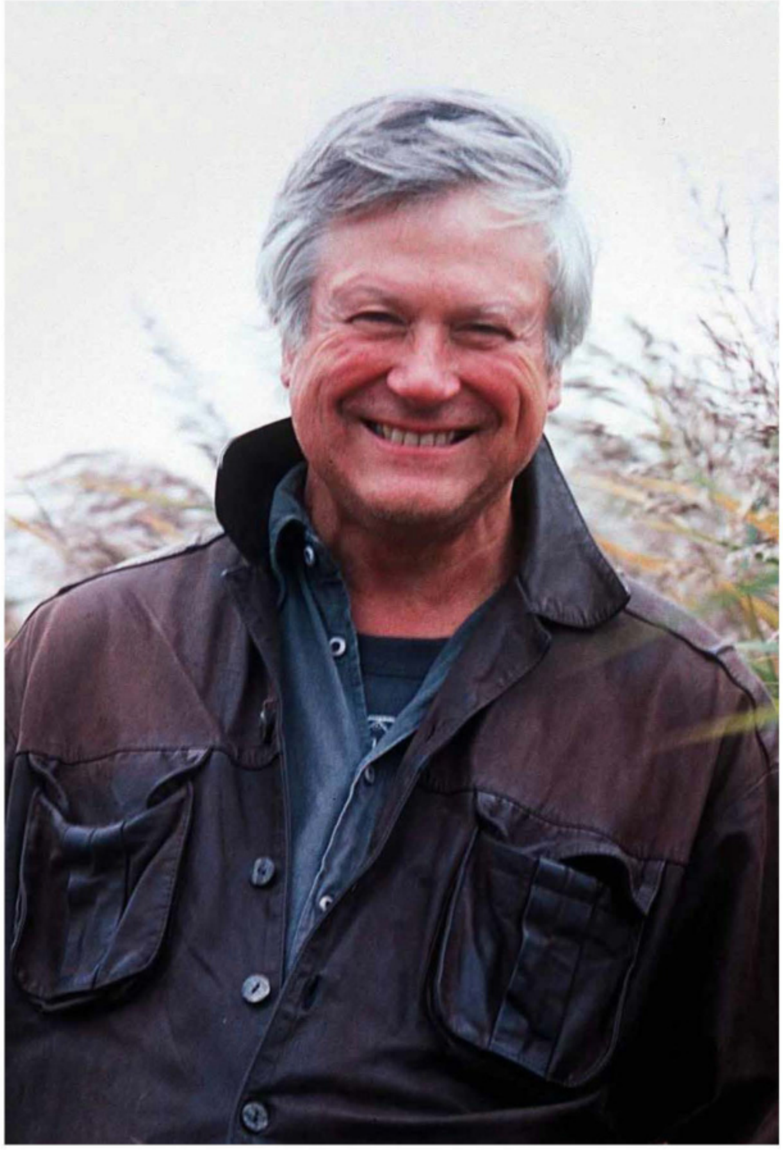
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, the crossword and the big idea

Discover how *Ammi majus* and cornflowers surrounding a wooden bench in Karen Burgess's Devon garden inspired photographer Mark Bolton to create his own dream patch, in his book *A New Cottage Garden*, page 107.

MARK BOLTON



ELIZABETH ORCUTT

IN PRAISE OF POTTERING

Part memoir, part rumination on the relationship between humans and the natural world, this new book from Richard Mabey is a delight, says **Alys Fowler**

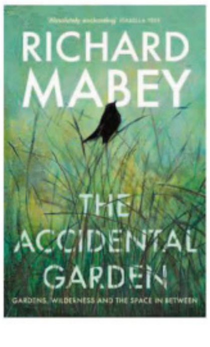
Richard Mabey loves this dance, the one between culture and nature. He's spent the best part of half a century waltzing across it. And you could pick any one of his 40 or so books and find an erudite, witty, very well-referenced argument for embracing the wild. Long before rewilding or 'nature writing' became such categories, Mabey was pointing out that weeds are very interesting and probably best not observed as unwanted (in his books *Flora Britannica*, *Food for Free*, *Weeds*, *A Brush with Nature* to name but a few), that the abandoned spaces often have an inherent beauty when nature is allowed to play (*The Unofficial Countryside*, *The Flowering of Britain*, *The Cabaret of Plants*) and all of this is very good for us, though sometimes when in the middle of the storm of our psyche, that can be hard to see (*Nature Cure*, *Beechcombings*, *Turned Out Nice Again*).

I cannot think of a book of his I wouldn't recommend. *Nature Cure* made me fall in love with the poet John Clare, *The Unofficial Countryside* gave me permission to jump the fence and my *Flora Britannica* has served as a bible, it is so well thumbed and stained. So, I was thrilled to hear there was another book coming, but curious too to see what he might want to add to this impressive body of work.

Twenty years ago, Mabey and his partner Polly set up home in Norfolk. We learn early on that it is this late-life romance that brought this man of outside, of field margins and wild edges, his first garden to call his own. And this book is an account of what it means for two people to come together in a garden and find room 'for both the weeds and the wilderness and the defining human habit of pottering'. Over ten chapters he explores what it means to plant things, vegetations, ideas, people and places.

These are wide-ranging debates that cover the gender-fluid nature of plants, decolonisation, migration, native/non-native, reparations for nature through the lens of the wood, the lawn, the pond and the flowerbed. There are times in these discussions where you feel he might not negotiate the hot coals of such topics; of what it means to call a plant an alien or

THE ACCIDENTAL GARDEN: GARDENS, WILDLIFE AND THE SPACE IN BETWEEN
by Richard Mabey
Profile Books, £12.99
ISBN 978-1805220701



> I felt like I'd spent a great afternoon, lying in the dappled shade of a garden tree, listening to Mabey muse on a life with plants

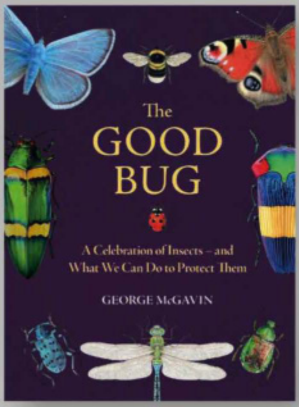
an immigrant as a white native man. But don't be fooled. By the end of the chapter he has succinctly, neatly wrapped up the deal. He started life, as he likes to remind us, as a philosophy student, and the tricky, thorny thoughts we put on plants are the meat of his work.

Where do plants belong, he asks? Where they care to be. They 'have always been autonomous wanderers' that 'aren't passive objects of landscape; they help compromise and shape [those] landscapes, and our experience of place'. He then peppers the argument further with a choice stanza from John Clare: 'Not mind alone the instinctive mood declares/ but birds and flowers and insects are its heirs/ taste is their joyous heritage and they? All choose for joy in a peculiar way'. As someone who is not only a fan of plants' proper dwelling places being where they choose, but also one who has found great solace and hope from this autonomy, how does a need for a Mediterranean bed in 'English nitrogen heavy rains' fit into this?

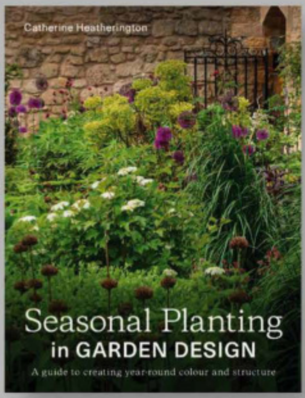
And I think it is here in the 'pottering' that I loved this book best, because Mabey has mellowed and softened to himself. With failing eyesight and walking stick at hand, he gardens to remember: 'botanising trips', childhood haunts, plant and human friends. It is not a long book, but it is far from slight too. I felt like I'd spent a great afternoon, lying in the dappled shade of a garden tree, listening to Mabey muse on a life with plants. ☐

Reviewer **Alys Fowler** is a horticulturist and garden writer.

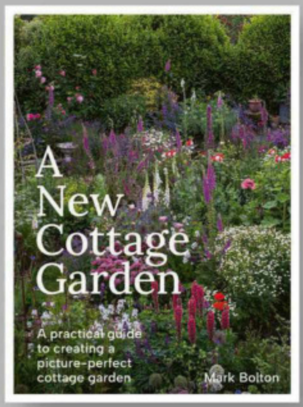
Recommended reads this month


The GOOD BUG
A Celebration of Insects – and What We Can Do to Protect Them
GEORGE McGAVIN

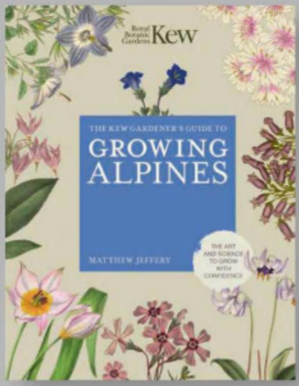
THE GOOD BUG: A CELEBRATION OF INSECTS – AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO PROTECT THEM
by Dr George McGavin
Michael O'Mara Books, £10.99
ISBN 978-1789296693
Both a celebration and a call to arms from one of the UK's foremost entomologists, this useful book shows us just what all of the vast array of insects in the UK do for our ecosystems, how humans are threatening their habitats and what we can do to help protect them.


Catherine Heatherington
Seasonal Planting in GARDEN DESIGN
A guide to creating year-round colour and structure

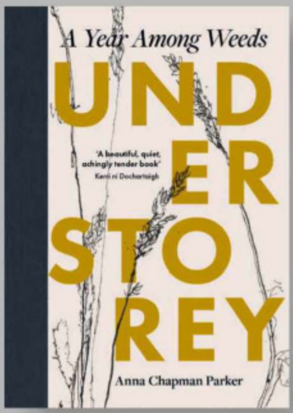
SEASONAL PLANTING IN GARDEN DESIGN: A GUIDE TO CREATING YEAR-ROUND COLOUR AND STRUCTURE
by Catherine Heatherington
The Crowood Press, £20
ISBN 978-0719843891
Experienced designer Heatherington explores the aesthetics of successional planting design that not only brings interest to the garden all year round, but also encourages biodiversity and takes steps towards mitigating the climate crisis. By emphasising the need for observation and flexibility, she helps readers improve their chances of responding to an uncertain future.


A New Cottage Garden
A practical guide to creating a picture-perfect cottage garden
Mark Bolton

A NEW COTTAGE GARDEN: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CREATING A PICTURE-PERFECT COTTAGE GARDEN
by Mark Bolton
Pimpernel Press, £22
ISBN 978-1914902963
A real-time, personal account of how an amateur enthusiast and garden photographer created a cottage garden around his 19th-century home in Devon. Includes practical advice on how to create the cottage garden of your dreams.


Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
THE KEW GARDENER'S GUIDE TO
GROWING ALPINES
MATTHEW JEFFERY

THE KEW GARDENER'S GUIDE TO GROWING ALPINES
by Matthew Jeffery
Frances Lincoln, £14.99
ISBN 978-0711290440
Kew's alpine expert shares tips and advice on how to grow and maintain these plants, with a focus on 50 different alpines. Includes 12 easy-to-follow projects for beginners and enthusiasts alike.


A Year Among Weeds
UNDERSTOREY
'A beautiful, quiet, achingly tender book'
Kerri ní Dochartaigh
Anna Chapman Parker

UNDERSTOREY
by Anna Chapman Parker
Duckworth, £18.99
ISBN 978-0715655207
Artist and writer Anna Chapman Parker spent a year looking closely at the weeds that she saw in gardens, on verges and around lamp posts, and captured them in line drawings and prose. She gives a new perspective these ubiquitous and often maligned plants, and meditates on how they appear in other artists' works.

KENNETH NOLAND

'When I'm writing, I'm thinking of gardening'

Jamaica Kincaid, the novelist, essayist, teacher, garden writer and gardener, talks about exploring the colonial history of plants

A collaboration between author Jamaica Kincaid and artist Kara Walker, *An Encyclopedia of Gardening for Colored Children* takes readers of all ages on a journey through the colonial history of plants, exploring fruits, flowers and other figures from our botanical world.

Jamaica's text accompanies each entry, and Kara Walker illustrates them with multi-layered watercolours. Guiding readers through the ABCs of the plants that define our world, both artists reveal the often-brutal history behind them. This witty yet hard-hitting book gives an important look at how the legacies of empire and slavery shape where and why we grow certain crops.

Jamaica's previous books include *At the Bottom of the River*; *Annie John*; *Lucy*; *The Autobiography of My Mother*; *My Brother*; *Mr Potter* and *See Now Then*. She teaches at Harvard University and lives in Vermont, USA.

Tell us about the new book and why you wrote it. The book is called *The Encyclopedia of Gardening for Colored Children* and it assumes that all children are one colour or another, as are all people, come to think of it. I wrote it for the child I still am. We also wrote for all the children around the world, using the letters of the alphabet to explore our gardens and the seeds of colonialism that remain in the natural world.

What did you learn from writing the book? I learned how much I loved and still love certain subjects: history, geography and botany. Working on the book also introduced me to Kara Walker, who I did not know personally before. But I love her work and it has been a pleasure to collaborate, even though we are still yet to meet in person.

If there's one idea you'd like to share from the book, what would it be? The world is a separate entity from the Earth.

I'll read anything about... How to keep deer out of my garden.

The books on my night stand right now are... *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire* Volumes 1 and 2 by AR Disney.

What sparked your interest in gardening? My mother and her ability to eat a fruit or vegetable, and if she liked it, plant the seed and see it grow until it bore fruit or vegetable, and see her eat it. If you have a parent who gardens, you will come to it one way or another. As I grew older, my fascination with gardening became intertwined with interests in power, geography and the effects of colonialism. My gardening also became tied up with my writing: when I garden, I am thinking of writing and when I am writing, I am thinking of gardening.

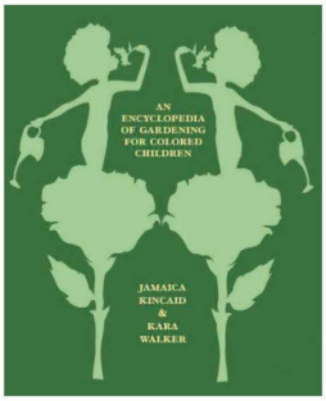
What's your guilty gardening secret? Buying more plants than I can afford. It has made my children hate the garden.

What is your current garden like? A lovable, to me, mess. I encounter so much in there and cultivate many things. Last winter, I planted 2,000 daffodils. I also grow *Crambe maritima* in honour of Derek Jarman and the garden he made in Dungeness. This spring just gone, I watched masses of peonies bloom.

Can you share your biggest gardening failure? To date, I am unable to grow *Papaver bracteatum,* or the great scarlet poppy.

What's your favourite landscape? There are so many, but they are all locked up in memory. Landscapes, like gardens, are often about memory and I have previously said that memory is a gardener's real palette. Often in the garden or in faraway lands, I encounter a smell or a sight that transports me back to Antigua.

What else are you up to at the moment? Looking out the window at some aggressive *Petasites japonicus*, seemingly about to march into a cottage in the woods.


AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GARDENING FOR COLORED CHILDREN
JAMAICA KINCAID & KARA WALKER

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GARDENING FOR COLORED CHILDREN
by Jamaica Kincaid and Kara Walker
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, £23.99
ISBN 978-0374608255

20-21 SEPTEMBER 2024, BERGAMO, ITALY

FACING THE CRISIS

Landscape Festival – I Maestri del Paesaggio: International Meeting of the Landscape and Garden

This year's International Meeting of the Landscape and Garden is a global gathering that will draw together top landscape thinkers from around the world for a series of talks on how design can be valuable and instrumental in helping us to confront the various crises we face, and foster regeneration in society. Looking at climate change and how we need to redefine planting and urban spaces, this year's programme sees Bergamo's historic piazza transformed into a green haven with an installation by landscape architect Catherine Mosbach.

There are also several seminars and courses happening around the main conference, all of which are aimed at both professionals in horticulture and landscape design and enthusiastic, knowledgeable gardeners.

2024 SPEAKERS

Arthur Adeya (Kenya)

Arit Anderson (UK)

Margherita Brianza (Italy)

Herbert Dreiseitl (Germany)

Andrew Grant (UK)

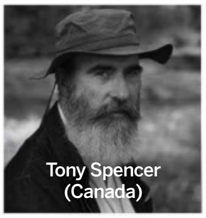
Damian Holmes (Australia)

Andrew Laidlaw (Australia)

Catherine Mosbach (France)

Yoonjin Park (South Korea)

Amalia Robredo (Uruguay)


Tony Spencer (Canada)

Find out more about the Bergamo Landscape Festival 2024*
For full details and to book your ticket for the conference
scan the QR code or go to **gardensillustrated.com/bergamo24**

* The first 20 *Gardens Illustrated* readers who book for the International Meeting of the Landscape and Garden Conference using the unique code GARDENSILLUSTRATED30 will get 30% off a full conference, lunch and dinner ticket.

ROSANNA CASTRINI; CHARLIE HOPKINSON

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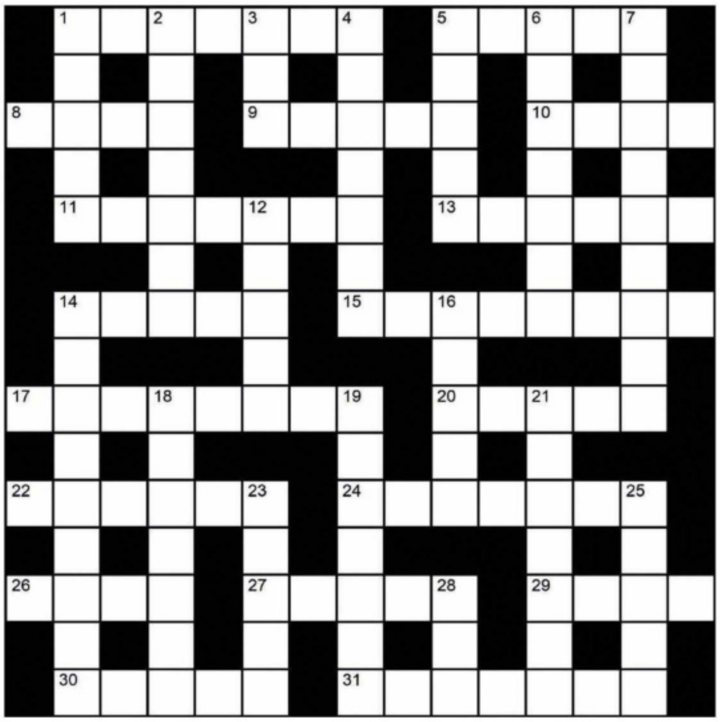
Crossword



ACROSS
1 Former genus of ragged-robin (now in *Silene* genus) (7)
5 Pungent-leaved crucifer, used in salads (5)
8 Stop … a flower stalk (4)
9 Bet it's used to support a plant! (5)
10/26 across Plant's underground growth system and surrounding soil (4,4)
11 *Euonymus europaeus* or ___ tree … endlessly splendid, anyway (7)
13 Possibly repot a South African plant best grown in conservatory (6)
14 A *Calycanthus* with large, magnolia-like flowers – 'Love Goddess' (5)
15 Former genus (now *Trachymene*) of blue lace flower – part hybrid, I discussed (8)
17 A *Heuchera* with glossy, dark foliage – a complete extinguishing of the light (8)
20 Moisture-retaining material put round base of plants (5)
22 Where roots and plant stems join (6)
24 *Ligularia*, commonly called ____ plant (7)
26 See 10 across
27 Willow I put in rose arrangement (5)
29 Bends a shoot to the ground for propagation (4)
30 After oak, this fruit is a nut gall (5)
31 Genus of the strawberry tree – a bit peculiar but useful! (7)

DOWN
1 Genus of eg bird's foot trefoil, etc; also type of pond lily (5)
2 Eg sea ___ or bladder ___ – sort of map icon (7)
3 Charity funded by private gardens opened to the public (abbrev) (3)
4 Marine algae used as fertiliser and soil improver (7)
5 As procumbent plants grow (5)
6 Genus of yellow-flowering plant in Asteraceae family – possibly ours? Yep! (7)
7 Common name for *Cotinus* shrub (5,4)
12 A series of tagetes … in bud is colourful (5)
14 Genus of plant aka 'all-heal' – larvae in a mess (9)
16 A named *Bergenia* (elephant's ears), after a Disney character (5)
18 *Primula veris* makes Buttercup tumble? (7)
19 Genus in Saxifragaceae family, aka 'fringe cups' – all-time variation (7)
21 Pamphlet: "Diminutive stem growth" (7)
23 Fern's reproductive cell (5)
25 The mountain avens genus – in sundry assortments (5)
28 Tease a leaf's main vein? (3)

• Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the September issue

SOLUTIONS TO SUMMER CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Davidia **5** Blanch **8** Rush **9** Zonal **10** Taro **11** Mespilus **13/3** Torbay Dazzler **16** Rustled **18** Rosebud **20** Sugary **23/21** Japanese quince **25** Hang **26** Hedge **27** Spot **28** Laurus **29** Seed pod.

DOWN 1 Drupe **2** VMH **4** Alnus **5** Boletus **6** Aster **7** Coriander **12** Padus **15** Portulaca **16/14** Red spider **17** Logan **19** Beeches **20** Supreme **22** Niger **23** Judas **24** Sword **27** Sap.

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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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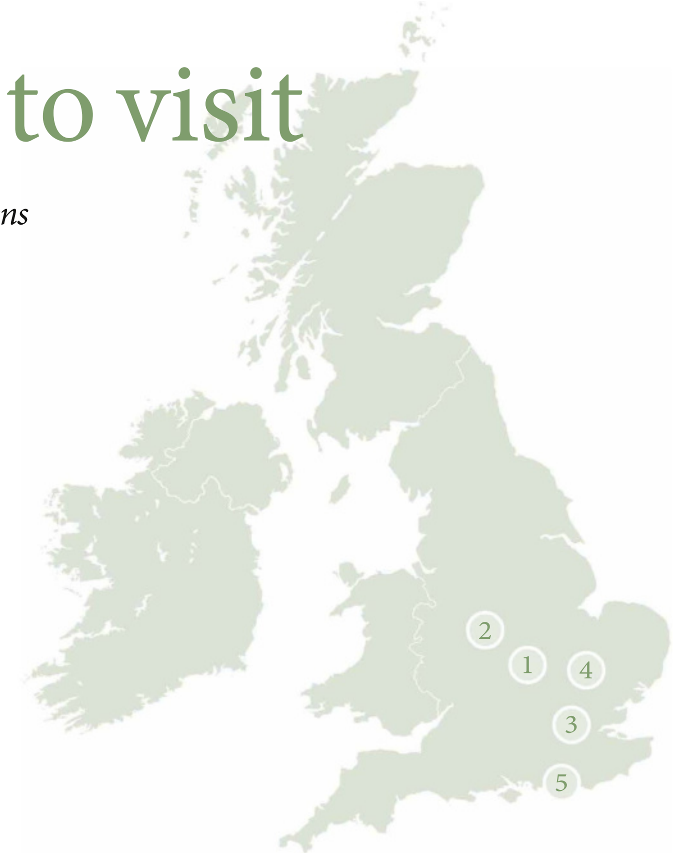
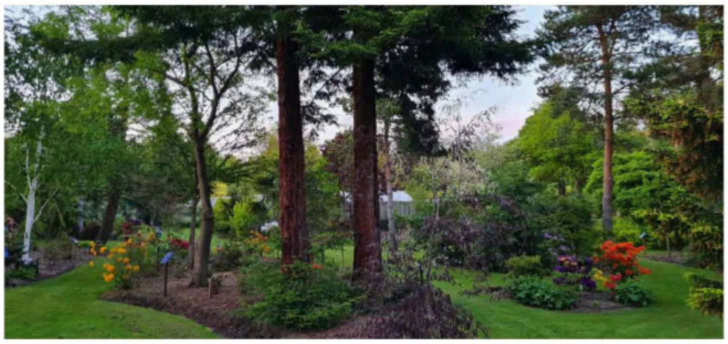
Summer is a great time to visit this collection of glorious gardens



1 COTTESBROOKE HALL & GARDENS

Late summer at Cottesbrooke sees the herbaceous borders flourishing, with phlox, geraniums and campanulas jostling for space among the many roses. In the Wild Garden, the giant gunneras, rodgersias and ferns are at their peak, providing a lush, shady escape from the heat.

Northamptonshire NN6 8PF | 01604 505808 | cottesbrooke.co.uk



2 BLUEBELL ARBORETUM & NURSERY

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London SW3 4HS | chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

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1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE | botanic.cam.ac.uk

5 DENMANS GARDEN

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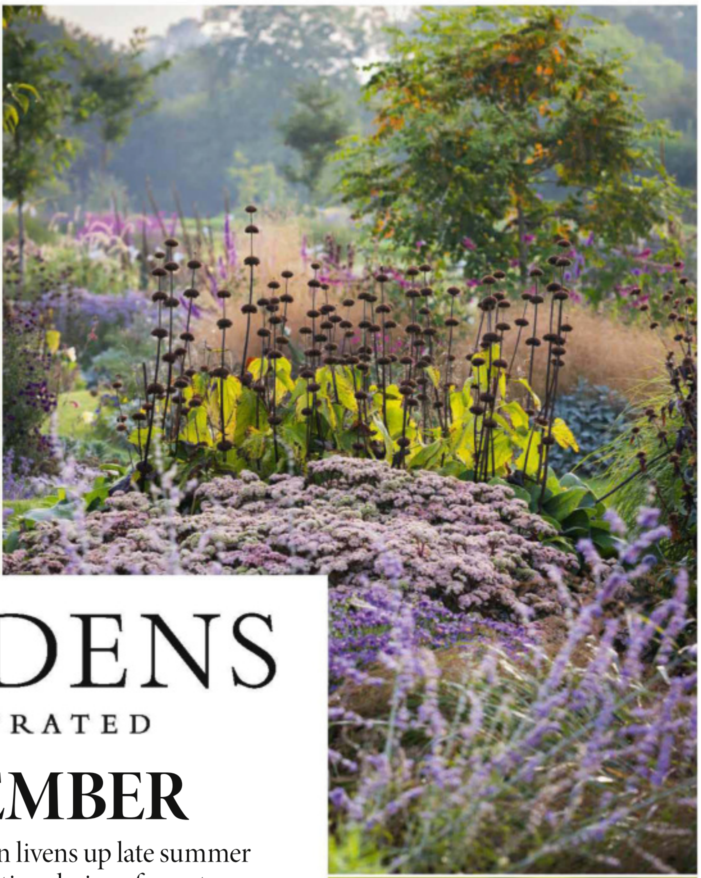
Fontwell, Nr. Arundel BN18 0SU | 01243 278950 | denmans.org



GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

SEPTEMBER

- Designer Jo Thompson livens up late summer with three new planting designs for pots
- Inspiring border combinations at the nursery where designers get their plants
- The best Japanese anemones to grow for flowers through autumn – and how to manage these beautiful thugs
- A contemporary, grass-led garden by Robert Myers in the heart of the countryside

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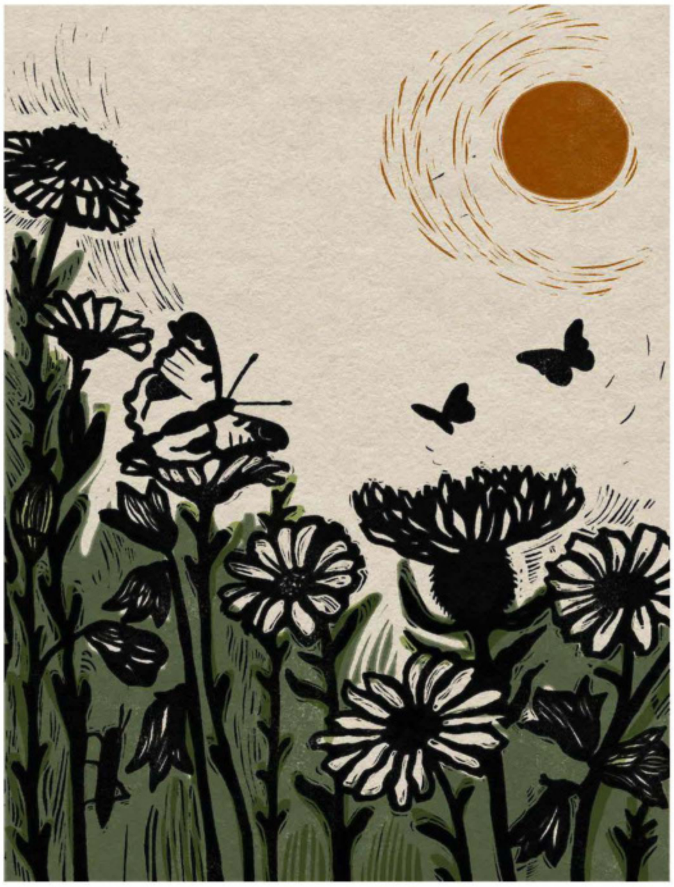
MINI MEADOWS MATTER

You don't need acres of meadows to help wildlife, says **Dave Goulson** – just a few square metres can make a real difference

ILLUSTRATION ROSANNA MORRIS



Gardens with even small areas of long grass had significantly more butterfly species

One hundred years ago, England and Wales had more than seven million acres of flower-rich meadows, cut for hay in summer and occasionally grazed by livestock. They teemed with butterflies, bumblebees and other insects, providing food for skylarks, corncrakes, lapwings and much more besides.

The switch to silage instead of hay as a winter food for farm animals made these meadows redundant. In a 50-year period in the middle of the 20th century, 97 per cent of our flower-rich meadows were swept away, a massive loss of habitat for our precious wildlife. Only small scraps remain; isolated islands of biodiversity surrounded by inhospitable terrain.

Restoring meadows has become a priority for many wildlife charities, and some exciting projects are underway. Most of us don't own a meadow and may feel that there isn't much we can do to help, but, if you have a garden, you'd be wrong; recent research shows that even tiny areas of wildflowers can attract significant numbers of pollinating insects.

Janine Griffith-Lee, one of my PhD students at the University of Sussex, recently asked home-owners to sow a 2m x 2m square of wildflower seed mix in their gardens. An equal number of gardeners were asked to do nothing, to act as controls. In their first year, the wildflower plots attracted 111 per cent more bumblebees, 87 per cent more solitary bees and 85 per cent more solitary wasps compared to the control gardens. It really does seem to work, and is simple to do.

Even without sowing wildflowers, simply leaving small patches of lawn unmowed until late summer boosts butterfly numbers. Many meadow butterflies rely on various grasses as food for their caterpillars. In my own garden, the long grass areas are brought to life in summer by the lolloping flight of meadow browns, gatekeepers, ringlets and marbled whites, while occasionally large and small skipper butterflies zoom past in a blur of orange.

Lisbeth Hordley of the charity Butterfly Conservation recently published data based on the charity's long-running Garden Butterfly Survey, which showed that gardens with even small areas of long grass had significantly more butterfly species and more individual butterflies. Incidentally, this study also found that encouraging ivy and allowing it to flower was another big driver of butterfly abundance in gardens, providing holly blue butterflies with food for their caterpillars and red admirals, comma butterflies and a host of other pollinating insects with nectar in autumn.

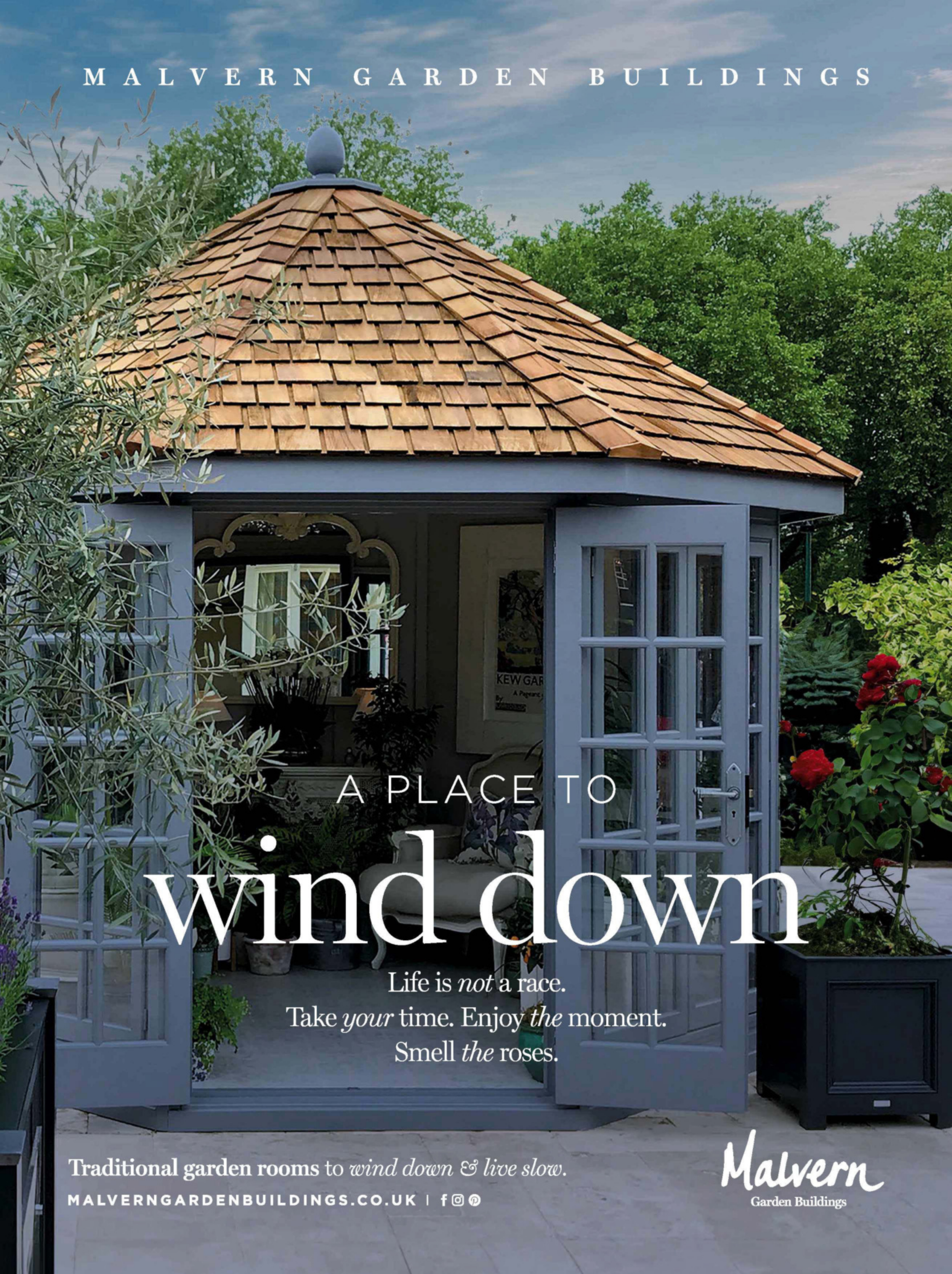
Patches of long grass also provide a home for grasshoppers and bush crickets. Grasshoppers sing for mates in the daytime, while crickets chirp gently in the evening and night. I love to sit quietly with a coffee or beer in hand and listen to these charming little creatures.

You might think that one small patch of wildflower meadow in your garden can't make much difference in the grand scheme of things, but it all helps. There are about 22 million private gardens in the UK, covering more than one million acres. If most had their own mini meadow, and were managed with nature in mind (for example, pesticide free, with a small pond), that could really make a difference.

Imagine too if we could persuade local councils to come on board, so parks, roundabouts and road verges also had meadow areas with long grass and wildflowers. Another of my students, Lorna Blackmore, found that road verges sown with wildflower seed mixes had 25 times as many flowers, 50 times as many bumblebees and 13 times as many hoverflies compared to the typical mown grass verge. They look beautiful too. Flowering road verges could help to connect our garden mini meadows and surviving patches of ancient wildflower meadows, and together could create a national network of flower-rich habitat.

All of this comes with no cost other than the outlay for some wildflower seeds, and there would be savings for councils in terms of reducing mowing. We'd have to alter our expectation of what gardens and urban greenspaces look like. Traditional mown grass with neat stripes isn't beneficial for wildlife and is a lot of work to maintain, but it looks neater than shaggy wildflowers. If we could learn to love this wilder look, then the bees, butterflies and birds would thank us. ☐

• Dave Goulson is Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex, and the author of *Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse*.



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